ECCE ANCILLA DOMINI.

Mary the Mother of our Lord.

MRS. RUNDLE CHARLES

AUTHOR OF

"CHRONICLES OF THE SCHÖNBERG-COTTA FAMILY."

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STUDIES IN THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL OF WOMANHOOD.

Ed avea in atto impressa esta favella,
Ecce ancilla Dei, sì propriamente
Come figura in cera si suggella.
DANTE, *Purgatorio*, x. 43.

Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo Figlio,
Umile ed alta più che creatura.
Paradiso, xxxiii. 1.

BY

ELISABETH RUNDLE CHARLES,
Author of "The Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family."

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Mary the Mother of our Lord.

INTRODUCTION.

DOES the world want more stories and more songs? As surely as the earth needs each year new spring-tides and each spring fresh showers, as surely as every shower opens fresh blossoms,

> "Sobald ein neues Kelchlein blüht
> Es fordert neue Lieder,
> Und wenn die Zeit zerrauschend flieht
> Jahreszeiten kommen wieder[1]."

But if we need the new songs and stories for ever giving back in music and picture the infinite varieties of this human life of ours, it is

[1] Goethe.

good sometimes also to listen to the old stories, and foremost among them to some of the oldest stories ever written, by the people who were at the fountain head of all our European literature, and turned the streams whither they would into channels in which they have flowed ever since, and are flowing still.

Drama, lyric, epic, prose and poem, as that wonderful old Greek race, on their sunny shores and islands saw and sang, we are seeing and singing still. As they felt and gave back the music of nature and human life we are translating them still.

In all the languages of our modern days we still think and sing in the forms of ancient Greece; so keen was their vision of beauty, their sense of the proportion and perfection which mean Art, that we have never surpassed them in perception of what nature and human life are, never surpassed their mode of uttering what they saw. A great hope has indeed since traversed the earth—

"Une grande espérance a traversé la terre,"

never to pass away.

Life is filled with a meaning unutterably deeper and sweeter than of old. The heavens are infinitely higher, and also nearer. Christianity, the incarnate Christ, has come, and race after race—Latin, Italian, German, English—has brought its contributions to the world's wealth of thought; yet what the Greeks saw, they saw with a keen discrimination, and rendered with a rhythm and a beauty never surpassed. And two of these old Greek myths or stories in which the Greeks expressed what they understood of what woman can be for good or evil, seem especially to demand our study at this moment.

The world is just now, as we all know, full of many voices of many women. Whatever gift we are prohibited from using to the full, it is certainly not the gift of speech. Against every evil under the sun (and indeed the evils are legion), brave and eloquent feminine voices are pouring out their denunciations far and wide. Strongholds of evil have been assailed and taken; and more, we may trust, will fall. But these two Greek myths lead us into quiet places, and among silent influences

of woman for evil or good, which will certainly never lose their power.

The Greeks, we know, were a seafaring people like ourselves. Few of their cities and villages were out of sight or hearing of the multitudinous smile and of the many-voiced sounds of the sea.

And into that sea, with its blue and purple waves, and the gold and green of the reflections of its sunny isles and shores, poured countless brooks and little rivers, having their fountains among its valleys and hills.

In their world of mythology, as we call it, of dreams and ideals, of fable and parable, of the "shadowy recollections," and "broodings of immortality" which haunted the childhood of the race, they specially associated womanhood with that water world which flowed all around them. And especially two visions of what woman can be for help and loss rose out of their seas and streams for all time—the Sirens, and the joyous, kindly, half-divine Nymphs of the seas and rivers and fountains.

There is something wonderfully suggestive in these contrary images, each with mighty, silent

influence lowering or lifting the lives of men; the Sirens softly dragging down the heroes to unhuman depths, which are death to heroes and heroism; the Nymphs silently watching by the fountains of life, keeping them pure and sweet, pouring water from their urns into the common cups and pitchers, and keeping all the forest places green and fresh.

These were the possibilities which the old Greeks saw in womanhood, and, seeing, made into lovely sculpture and rhythmic song.

The influence of woman seemed to them like the flowing of water, living, moving, all pervading, with infinite music springing out of depths of infinite silence.

First, the Sirens. In the North they have grown into mermaids. And of all the pictures of them, none can be more terribly beautiful than one by Burne Jones, of the mermaid softly drawing the man down to the depths in her wreathing arms. She does not look wicked, she is not aware what she is doing. The watery depths are no death or terror to her. Unconsciously she is pulling down the life

she does not understand into an element which is natural to her, where (if anything so definite as intention can be ascribed to that instinctive attraction which she exercises), scarcely knowing why, and not at all knowing whither, she intends to make his life easy and sweet, out of reach of sorrow and death, and right and wrong, and all other troublesome human things. And half asleep, half intoxicated, with the soft plashing of sunny waves in his ears, floating out of our world of combat and aspiration into a life like her own, he falls and falls into what for him is the region of darkness and death—

> "Halb zog sie ihn, halb sank er hin
> Und ward nicht mehr gesehn."

It does not necessarily lead us to think of one especial kind of sin. It is just life sinking to lower levels; from aspirations to dreams, from heroic effort to instinctive enjoyment, doing whatever is pleasant at the moment, just because it *is* pleasant; the life pictured in George Eliot's Tito.

The reverse of the same mermaid's or Siren's

story we have in the picture of Ulysses and his companions, lashing himself to the mast and stopping their ears to make them deaf to the ravishing songs of the Sirens. Resistance to evil despoils evil of its enchantment. The baffled Sirens have to flee.

In the loftier Christian legend (as also in Parzival), illumined with the light of redemption, resistance to evil is not only escape from the lower life for the one who resists, but redemption into the higher life for the creature who tempts and is resisted.

But to this, the redeeming power of love, the Greek story cannot reach. The Undine does not find a soul. The mermaid does not find a St. Brendan to wake her to immortality with waters of life. The image remains unbroken with the larger eddies of the regenerating hopes, simply a vision of the terrible, silent influence which lowers, not by the conscious effort of what it *does*, but by the unconscious attraction of what it *is*.

And on the contrary side there are the Nymphs, the divine maidens of the fountains and springs;

the Nereids and the Naiads; visions and types of womanhood in all its vivifying power and ceaseless, quiet, ministries of beneficence. Of these there are multitudes. There are the Oceanides, the friendly nymphs of the wide world-sea, who, in a kindly band, daring the anger of their father and of Zeus, float to the rock where Prometheus is bound in lonely anguish, to soothe him by the fragrance of their presence and by the music of their soft voices. "What fragrance, what music," he asks, "is floating to him in his desertion?" and they bid him fear nothing, for a loving company are bringing sympathy to him on their swift wings, friends of the friend of man.

Then there are the Nereids, who dwelt in the blue depths of the familiar Aegean Sea that lapped on the island beaches and plashed on the golden-tinted rocks of Greece. They were allied to the Olympian gods, but were nearer man, and were full of beneficent kindness. They were named by sweet melodious individual names, much called on by fishermen and sailors, and were full of friendly care for those in peril

on the sea. They had their temples on the shores, full of beautiful and joyous forms, the drapery floating in lovely motion like the waves of the sea, those fair images of life and movement, brought to the halls of our own great city from their ancient home in Lycia.

And besides these, there are the fair families of the friendly nymphs of the rivers and streams and fountains, worshipped with the great mother Demeter herself as fosterers of life and fruitfulness and blessing, maiden types of all that is fresh and living in nature, and all that is reviving and beneficent in womanhood. "Providence places women beside all cradles."

Silent, glad, kindly, the nymphs of the fountains are ever pouring the life-giving waters from their urns into the common cups and pitchers of our common homes (beautiful cups and pitchers, however common, because Greek), whilst they keep the forest places green and fresh.

There are, indeed, battlefields in the world, and battles that must be fought with elaborate organization and strenuous, conscious effort; yet it is well also to go back to these old visions and

pictures of the silent power of womanhood, for ever working with its unconscious influence, with attraction terribly powerful to lower all that is highest, but as powerful for ever to keep the fountains of life fresh and pure and sweet.

The beautiful old stories lead our thoughts on to another type of all that is loveliest and purest in womanhood. A maiden-mother, "blessed among women," beside a manger cradle, with songs of angels and worship of simple shepherds and the adoration and gifts of sages, "keeping all these things, and pondering them silently in her heart," and bringing new life to the world through her quiet, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word."

"Doch rufen von drüben
Die Stimmen der Geister,
Die Stimmen der Meister:
Versäumt nicht zu üben
Die Kräfte des Guten.

"*Hier winden sich Kronen*
In ewiger Stille,
Die sollen mit Fülle
Die Thätigen lohnen.
Wir heissen euch hoffen."

GOETHE, *Symbolum.*

Mary the Mother of our Lord.

I.

The Silences.

So closely is the veil of reverent silence folded around the Mother of our Lord, the silence as to her outward life, the silence which characterizes her inward life—"keeping these things and pondering them in her heart," that many among us have a shrinking from approaching the subject as in any way apart or detached. Three reasons especially seem consciously or unconsciously to lead not a few of us to this: the silence folded, it would seem purposely, around her; the tendency of everything she said or did, of her few words, of

her one Song, as of her silence, to direct our hearts upward away from herself; and the predominance, as it seems to many, of the passive elements in her character.

And yet when we look further into the subject, each one of these reasons seems a reason not to repel us from the subject, but to draw us towards it.

The life of Mary seems to gather us into a stillness like her own, into a peace and quiet which is what many of us, in these restless days, sorely need. In these days of "much coming and going," there often seems indeed "scarcely leisure so much as to eat," and we need inward leisure so to eat and drink of the great realities that they may nourish our life. There can be no growth in a whirlpool, there can be no progress in a whirlwind; and to "come apart and rest awhile" in the shadow of that steadfast life may help some of us to comprehend and approach nearer the ideal of womanhood which it enshrines.

If we are to learn from the life of any of the saints, surely none might help us more than hers

whose canonization was visibly and audibly direct from Heaven, to whom the angel Gabriel was sent with the crown of supreme benediction. "Full of grace," "highly favoured," in whatever direction we interpret the fullness of that angelical salutation, it must surely mean that the Divine wisdom and love which elected her to be the mother of our Lord, divinely fitted her for that transcendent election. For in that kingdom of God, which is the world of truth, the distinctions and the ranks are all real, from within outward. The names are definitions, the outer glory grows out of the inner; and if there is but one supreme type for all humanity, the likeness of the Son of Man Himself,—but One whom to follow wholly is not mechanically to copy but livingly to grow,—yet surely it is worth while to study closely and reverently the blessed Mother who was nearest Him at the manger, in the home, and at the Cross.

"Man, of the substance of His Mother," must have reference to the "reasonable soul" as well as to the "human flesh."

Surely there is not one among us who would

not feel that the salutation of Elisabeth, "What is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" was simply honour due; not one of us who, if there are orders and ranks, first and last, higher and lower, in the kingdom of Heaven, would not rejoice to find this lowliest of all highest of all, near her Son and her Lord, on the heights of glory and power, as she was near Him in the depths of humiliation and weakness on the Cross.

And as to that most undeniable tendency of all she said and sang and did, or did not say and do, to lead away from herself to her Lord and ours, what stronger attraction can there be to the study of her life than this? She, indeed, has solved the problem of escaping from her own shadow, by the perpetual turning of her whole being towards the light.

The longer we look at her, the more our eyes will follow the guidance of hers. As in one of Raphael's pictures, whilst the angel is holding the crown above her head, she, entirely unconscious of the crown, sees only the child Jesus springing into her arms; or as in one of Correggio's,

as she gazes on the infant on her knee, she makes us feel how the light beams from Him[1]. It is the very hush of silence around her and within her, which is the essence of the lesson of her life, the *being* which is at the heart of all the *doing*. The silence is not the silence of emptiness or stagnation, but the hush of a tide "too full for sound or foam." The quietness is the quietness of a strong will resolutely offered up, rather than of a weak will easily yielded. The passiveness is the passiveness of strength enduring; not of helplessness submitting, not of the lifeless victim, but of the willing sacrifice. The retirement is the self-effacement of one who could face for hours a ferocious mob, standing by the cross of her Son. The silence is the silence of the voice capable of the Magnificat.

There is indeed another reason for not approaching the subject in words at all; the deep sense of inadequacy in the writer; and the example of the silence of the heart closest to the

[1] The Holy Family, by Raphael, in the Louvre, and by Correggio in the Dresden Gallery.

mystery. It is so certain that all we say must be imperfect; it is so possible that it may be mistaken! But this is a reason which might silence us on any high spiritual or moral theme. We can only reverently study and humbly say what we have learned, through the searching of sacred Scriptures enforced on us by the lips of the Master, and trust that the truth we learn, and try to utter, may help those who need it, and not hinder those who have learned more.

II.

The Angelical Salutation and the Response.

IN the story of the Holy Child Jesus, we seem to touch again the childhood of the world[1]. The story is taken up, not from the last chapter of the earlier history, but from the first. It is not a mere reformation or restoration, but a new creation which is dawning on the world. Yet this new creation is not the superseding but the fulfilment of the old; no mere destroying it as a failure, but the breathing into it of a new life.

The ancient world of the Sons of the Morning opens again to us—that ancient world to which

[1] "The Feast of the Annunciation may well be called the Feast of the Incarnation. Then our redemption began. . . . We cannot enough praise Mary, that high and noble creature."—Martin Luther.

our human world was so new; yet is itself ever young with immortal youth, while our world is growing old.

Heaven and earth are blended again. The angels come and go naturally, as if the intercourse had never been broken. They are heard singing in the sky; one alone, and then a multitude; singing in words the shepherds understand. They are indeed "afraid," stricken with the awe which always characterizes a real manifestation of the supernatural. But they understand. The voices once heard, there is no perplexity about the language. "The tongues of Angels" do not share the confusion of Babel. We have travelled back beyond Babel into Paradise; the Angels are there, coming in and out among men; only the flaming swords are gone.

And so with Gabriel and that first "Ave." He is "sent from God to Nazareth, the little town of Galilee, to a virgin espoused to a man named Joseph, of the house and lineage of David"; the royal house, from which in its deepest humiliation had never died out the expectation that from it was to arise one day

a King, greater than Solomon. "And the virgin's name was Mary."

The Angel came in beside her where she was, and he spoke to her in quiet words and tones, that she alone was to hear.

"Una voce modesta
Forse qual che fu dal Angelo a Maria[1]."

"Hail!" he said, "rejoice," "welcome." Heaven was open again, welcoming and pouring its joy into earth. It tasks any of our languages to render the fullness of the two words of this Salutation, the χαῖρε κεχαριτωμένη.

The two words are so allied, they seem, like a double star, to radiate into infinite and intertwining vistas of light and joy.

Joy, grace, love, the grace of all beautiful creatures, the graciousness and charity and light of Heaven are in them. "Highly favoured" seems too external and courtly; "full of grace" perhaps scarcely expresses the freshness of the new tide of joy and life poured in, however full of grace that soul had been before. Probably

[1] Dante, *Purgatorio*, xiv.

however, the words were not Greek words at all, but some ancient provincial popular Aramaic speech, such as is not extinct even now, it is said, among the secluded valleys of the Lebanon perhaps the heavenly "Hail" was akin to the usual Oriental greeting of "Peace be with thee." But, whatever the words were, being, necessarily in the first form they reached human ears, a translation of the original in "the tongues of angels," they doubtless meant more than can be compacted into the "tongues of men." "*Hail! rejoice!*" thou that hast reason above all to rejoice, "*the Lord is with thee.*" An echo of the promise of "Emmanuel" which must have been so well known in her own house and lineage of David[1]. "*Blessed art thou among women.*" Christian art has lavished its richest treasures in picturing that greeting. The majesty and radiant beauty of the Heavenly Messenger, glowing from the presence of God; the purity, grace, and simplicity of the maiden. It was a message of infinite joy; Heaven pouring into earth the deepest fountain of its own

[1] The much debated question of the harmonizing of the two genealogies is not one to be entered on here.

eternal bliss. But to Mary this first impact of the Infinite brought trouble and agitation—as a sea agitated by winds, as an army thrown into disorder, as a people in tumult. It is the word used to express the agitation from which our Lord would guard His disciples when He was leaving them. "Let not your heart be troubled," and it is a more emphatic form of the word. She was "greatly troubled"; and it is in this tumult of her thoughts that we get the first glimpse of the strength and self-control of her character, the power of silence, the dialogues that could go on unspoken in the inner world of that lowly, lofty soul, until the right moment came for words. She "reasoned within herself" what this Salutation might be. She needed the quieting "Fear not" as much as the shepherds.

The Annunciation was to bring transcendent joy to her, new life to the world. Her name was to be blessed by countless lips throughout the ages. But the first steps of that path of blessing were steps into such isolation with God as can scarcely have been known by any other human spirit. The benedictions, the felicitations, of the

ages rest on Mary, the mother of Jesus, but she stands before us ever as the Blessed Virgin as well as the Blessed Mother, the type of lowly, lofty, pure, self-possessed maidenhood as well as of gracious motherhood.

Absorbing as were the joys and sorrows, the duty and the devotion to her Son, and linked as she is through Him to all the generations, she learned first to stand alone, to be *herself*, the one unique creature God meant her to be. God does not indeed ever create souls in batches. Each personality is unique, and so essentially itself, called by its own individual name, that its loss would make a gap in the harmony of the worlds, clearly perceptible to Him who listens to all. It is significant that our Lord in addressing Mary, twice calls her not mother but "woman," as if recognizing and honouring not only the immortal relationship, but the distinct womanly personality and character.

The great prophets have, indeed, again and again learned or begun their mission in the wildernesses. Moses, St. John the Baptist, and St. Paul had their Horeb, their desert, their

Arabia, until "the day of their showing forth"; but with Mary the solitude was the deeper solitude in the midst of the home. Walking along the common paths, doing the common duties, yet with the soul alone, isolated in the solitude of an unutterable mystery—a mystery which was to be the redemption of the world, but was for the time known to her alone. To comprehend the beauty of her soul, to realize the possibilities involved in her life for all maidenhood and motherhood, for all women, we must first recognize her isolation, her election, her setting apart for the fulfilment of this great mystery of love and sacrifice, designed before the world began, revealed immediately the race had fallen.

"The Lord is with thee," "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee," had indeed for Mary a depth of mystery none else can comprehend. Her response involved a grace and a surrender none else can fathom. But the moral and spiritual side of that grace and that surrender, all that made her not an exception,

but an example and type of perfected womanhood, is involved in those two sentences: the Salutation from heaven to earth: the response from earth to heaven.

Gabriel's "*The Lord is with thee*" turns aside the fiery swords which barred the gates of paradise, and begins to rend all the separating veils and walls of partition.

Mary's "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord*" breaks the echo of Eve's distrust, whilst it fulfils her highest aspirations [1]. The "Practise of the Presence of God" is the starting-point and the goal, the original and continual beginning, the high and perpetual end, the root and fruit of Mary's religion. Doubtless this did not begin for her with the angelical salutation. The spirit was prepared for the gift. The greeting and the

[1] One of the most significant and lovely of all the living pictures in the *Divina Commedia* is that of Eve, restored and glorified, and beautiful with the beauty of heaven, at the feet of Mary:

"La piaga che Maria richiuse ed unse,
Quella ch' è tanto bella da' suoi piedi
È colei che l' aperse e la punse."

Paradiso, xxxii. 6.

grace were given to one already well known in the Presence where Gabriel stood.

Yet every fresh step upward in spiritual life must begin in a fresh direct communion with the Source of life; as every new widening of the path for blessing begins with the new entering in at that strait gate of lowly obedience. And every fresh revelation of the presence of God—every fresh draught from the fountain of life—must issue in a fresh surrender of the whole being to God.

Isolation with God, with her as with each of us, must be the secret of all true service of man; subjection to God the secret of all true freedom of soul. Gabriel's "*The Lord is with thee*," and Mary's "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord*"—between these two poles of Divine communion and complete self-sacrifice all the highest spiritual life must vibrate.

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III.

"*Thy Cousin Elisabeth.*"

THE voice which brought the joy from Heaven, which announced the beginning of a new creation—the voice of the archangel standing in the presence of God, concluded the Divine message by tenderly leading Mary to the sympathy of another human heart.

"Lift up the lad and hold him in thy hand," one angel had said to a forsaken slave. Another had brought the cruse and the little cake to the despairing prophet. And now Gabriel reveals the gift bestowed on Elisabeth, opening a fountain of sympathy for Mary.

The isolation into which God often leads His elect, the Sinais and Horebs and wildernesses of all kinds, are not meant to end in isolation, but to prepare for the service of man. The desert is the school for the city. Necessarily; because

to be with God, who loves the world, must mean to minister to the world He loves, not to leave it. "*Thy cousin Elisabeth.*" Precious, homely words; precious because of their homeliness. It is the simplicity in this and all the Divine stories (that is, the Divine way of telling the human stories), the frank presentation of contrasts without an attempt at explanation, that distinguishes them from the human way of telling Divine stories. The supernatural and the natural—the sacred and the secular—the miraculous manna and the daily bread—are close beside each other; not confused, scarcely even blended, but side by side; eternally distinct, yet inextricably intertwined. The miracles do not trickle down in scanty drops; when needed they are lavished. The water is transubstantiated into wine, not by cups, but by waterpots; the miraculous draught is of fishes so "many" and so "great" that the net breaks—or does *not* break, by another miracle. But the next day the Master who changed the water into wine may have to ask the Samaritan woman for a drink from her pitcher; the next moment, the Apostles, whose

net did not break, had to drag it laboriously to the land.

The marvels are to reveal Divine love, not to paralyze human effort or to swamp ordinary human powers. The Five Thousand are fed from the five loaves and two small fishes; but the loaves and the fishes are used, the crumbs are gathered up into the baskets, that nothing be lost.

The heavenly organization of charity, lavish as it may seem, is to be carried out by real work, and supplemented by reverent and careful thrift; and in none of these Divine stories is this more evident than in this the origin of all. It is not merely the amount of marvels reported in the apocryphal stories, it is the occasion, and the kind of marvels, that make the contrast between them and the received Gospels. In these nothing seems done to startle by suspending natural laws; the aim is to teach, and to reveal the love within the law. There is no ostentation at the heavenly table. When the supernatural breaks in on the natural it is a "wonder" because it is a "sign," not an empty tinkling of cymbals, but a *word* with a weighty

significance, or the supplying of a need to be met in no other way. In the apocryphal stories of the journeys of the Blessed Virgin, angels may visibly attend her, flowers spring up in her path, trees bend down to yield her their fruit, fountains may be opened for her thirst. In the Gospels Gabriel gives his message, linking as never before the Divine and the human, earth and heaven. And then he simply tells her of the miracle which links her with her "cousin Elisabeth," and departs from her. He does not tell her whither to go, but he reveals to her the joyful secret of the one heart in the world which at that moment could best understand the glory and the difficulty of her own destiny. His suggestion is her guide. "Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth." That house was a place of safety and repose to her, the home of her kindred and also the birthplace of the forerunner of the Christ. The sacred ties of kindred are recognized and used wherever this is possible. Kindred, cousinship, does not, of course, always imply kinship in

spirit. Our cousins are certainly not always those most akin to us, and in that case, being near us without understanding us, they naturally misunderstand us most. This was too evidently the case in the life of our Lord Himself. "Neither did His brethren (kinsmen, cousins) believe in Him." But when the kinsmen "according to the flesh" are also kinsmen in spirit, the natural bond does give a homely intimacy, a sense of natural duty and claim which makes the spiritual tie more wholesome, helpful and true.

Gabriel doubtless knew this when he said to Mary, "Thy cousin Elisabeth"; and abundantly did the welcome of the aged woman prove the reality of the inward kinship.

We are told nothing about Mary's journey; it is not said if any accompanied her and guarded her. We know indeed of the Presence which always guarded her. We know what words of joy and hope were making melody in her heart.

When the last step of that journey was accomplished through the flowery plains of Galilee, the valleys green with young corn, the

shady woods, the open uplands,—sprinkled with pomegranates and flowering trees, or clothed with olives and vines,—or along the rocky mountain paths, she entered that quiet home which was at that moment the one house of rest and comprehension in all the world for her. We know it was a house of prayer, of prayers for many years apparently not answered; though now, at last, as the angel had told her, so wonderfully granted. We know, also, that it was a house of mercy; for those within it had "lived in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," and those commandments are not merely negative. The doors which she entered must have been well known to the widowed and the fatherless, the destitute and the forsaken; the poor and needy, we may be sure, were not sent thence empty away.

"She entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth," the mother of the Forerunner, of whom by the testimony long afterwards of Mary's Son, none greater had been born of woman. But to Elisabeth, the joy and glory of her own destiny were absorbed, as the

morning star in the sunrise, in the joy and glory given to Mary.

Elisabeth also was "filled with the Holy Ghost." The aged voice rose clear and full, and with a "loud" voice she responded to Mary's greeting, "Blessed art thou among women, blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" The wife of the aged priest bows before the young maiden from Galilee; the highest of the household bows in rapturous homage before the mother of the King. The house becomes a House Beautiful; a house of "the Interpreter[1]." "For you are fairer than I am," said one, "and you are more comely than I," said another, for they could not see the glory on themselves that they could each see on the other. Elisabeth adds a new benediction, which seems to unfold not only the transcendent gift bestowed on Mary, but the grace in her receiving it. "*Blessed is she that believed.*" The words seem to imply a tender, regretful allusion to the doubt which had marred

[1] *Pilgrim's Progress.*

the angel's promise to her husband. For on that house, full of prayer and mercy and joyful hope as it must have been, there had fallen a strange silence. "Thou hast not believed," the angel Gabriel had said to Zacharias, "therefore thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day when these things shall be fulfilled."

The word in Elisabeth's benediction, "Blessed is she that believed," is not the same as that used by Gabriel, or by Elisabeth in welcoming Mary; it is the blessing of the Beatitudes; happy, joyful, blissful; blessed with the inherent beatitude of *character*, which is the deepest blessing in all beatitudes. It is the word Mary takes up in her hymn, and hears echoing back to her heart through all the generations. For Elisabeth's welcome wakened in the blessed Virgin the gift of song. As she entered that house of peace and hope her voice rose in her own immortal hymn.

IV.

The Magnificat.

THE sympathy of Elisabeth awakened the Song of Mary. The great morning-song and Birthday Hymn of Christendom was the response of one woman's heart to another, and was first breathed in the quiet of a home.

How much of the best music of the world has been awakened thus, by the sympathy of hearts to which no utterance in song is given! Indeed, how could there be any singing, but for the songs without words, in the minds that comprehend and the hearts that love? If the common language were not there, how could the poets sing at all? And who can say how large a share the generous sympathy of the inarticulate multitude has had in the greatest songs of the greatest of the poets?

The Magnificat is the Matin song of a new day. It is also the last of the great songs of the earlier age, of those ancient Psalms in which the heart of the Psalmist dances and sings, and shouts for joy in the Presence of God. It is the link between the sacred music of the past and of the future.

The song of the blessed Virgin has often been compared with the birthday hymn of Hannah, but the contrasts are as significant as the similarities. Both are grand national hymns, each singer soaring away from her own individual joy to the great hopes and destinies of her people. Both are full of the holiness and righteousness of God, as the essential element of all trust and joy in Him. But it is impossible not to observe the tone of personal and national triumph over enemies in the mother of Samuel, which is absent in the mother of Jesus.

"Talk no more so exceeding proudly," Hannah says. "Let not arrogancy come out of your mouth"; for she has been despised and has suffered. "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces, out of heaven shall He thunder

upon them." Thunders and lightnings are in Hannah's song. Mary's heart, full of joy as it was, had to be pierced more deeply by a heavy and ruthless sword, and judgment as well as mercy is on her lips; but judgment and mercy are absorbed in the love which is the source of both. There is indeed no weak confusing of right and wrong. "The proud," not merely those high in place, but self-exalted "in the imaginations of their hearts," are to be "scattered," and that is a part of the joy. The "mighty" are to be "cast down from their thrones," "the rich," those whose riches are a mere hoarded decaying heap, instead of being seed to the sower and bread to the eater, are (as they always, inevitably, must be) "sent empty away." The curses must be as inherent in the sins as the beatitudes in the graces.

The scattering is as inevitable for the "pride" which isolates, the "emptying" as inseparable from the avarice that impoverishes, as the "kingdom of Heaven" is inseparable from the "poor in spirit"; the "inheriting of the earth" from the "meek"; the "satisfying" from the "hunger and thirst after righteousness"; the

"obtaining mercy" from the "merciful"; the "seeing God" from the "pure in heart."

But there is an expanding radiance of the dawn of the new day in this song of the morning that absorbs the darkness.

The light and joy of all the Beatitudes are in it as in her who sings it, whose heart it reveals. Like the Beatitudes it springs from depths of humility, the humility which "having nothing," looks up, believing, and "possesses all things"; acknowledging the highest gifts as frankly as the "low estate." "Poor in spirit," hers "is the Kingdom of Heaven"; "meek," she "inherits all things"; "merciful," she has "obtained mercy"; "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," she is filled"; "pure in heart," she "sees God." By her "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." breaking the long echo of the revolt of Eve, she, most blessed of the "peacemakers," brings in the Peace of the great Reconciliation.

The germ of the "Henceforth there is neither Jew nor Greek, for we are all one in Christ Jesus," is doubtless in the blessed Virgin's song; and yet the links with her forefathers, with the nation of

Israel, the house of David, the family of Abraham, remain. It is as a Jewish maiden of the house of David, of the seed of Abraham, that she glorifies that Seed of Abraham in Whom "all the nations of the earth were to be blessed." The past lives on in the present, the present lives on into the eternal future; "all the generations shall call me blessed." The old is fulfilled, but not destroyed in the new. The divinely new creation of humanity is rooted in the old sacred soil. The very essence of the Incarnation is this union of creation and history. These contrasted themes, the lowliness and the glory, the sacred past and the infinite future, are interwoven through all the Magnificat.

Then, after the Song, follows another hush of the silence so characteristic of Mary and her history: "And Mary abode with Elisabeth about three months." Three quiet months she stayed in that house of worship and peace, of faith and mercy, with the aged kinswoman in her sympathy and joy, and the aged priest gathering under his discipline of dumbness the hopes that were soon to flow forth like one of the fountains

on his own hills, in a river of praise, in the birth-day hymn of the Baptist, the second morning hymn of Christendom. Mary had sung her own hymn for us all, beautiful among all its graces in its being one instance out of many of the sweetest and strongest hymns of the Christian Church being sung by single voices, which but for that one utterance might have passed mute and unremembered away; the one outpouring from the one vase of pure alabaster of the precious perfume of a whole life.

"And Mary returned to her own house." From the reverent welcomes and the sacred quiet of that home, from the friendship and care of those two blameless ones; tender with all the sympathy of holy old age, which has proved the perils and sorrows of the way, for those who have yet to tread it, she went forth to the chill of the outer world, to the possibility of reproach and misunderstanding, which we know was only turned aside from that pure and lofty soul by the voice of an angel from heaven. Perhaps she never knew of this, as the just man to whom it was given to be the guardian of the mother and

the Holy Child took her to her place in his own home.

But it should not be forgotten, that in the surrender of her whole being to the will of God, which was to bring in the redemption of man, there was a time when this maiden of Nazareth stood absolutely alone in the world, in the majesty of her faith and purity and lowliness. In the beauty of her humility we must not forget the heroism of her courage. Through all her silence we ever hear the flow not only of the tender melodies but of the grand choral harmonies of her Magnificat.

V.

Bethlehem.

THE great joy for all people, "the Saviour which is Christ the Lord," had come to His world. Mary's second journey into the hill country of Judea was over; cared for, honoured, guarded by that just man of royal race and royal heart, Joseph the carpenter of Nazareth. And now, in one of the rocky recesses of the inn, in that city of David among the hills, the blessed Mother rested, with the child Jesus beside her in the manger. Whatever antiquarians and travellers may teach us about the details of the scene, the pictures of adoring Christendom give it us in its ideal meaning. Among the animals, the ox and the ass, the child Jesus was cradled, among the strangers, and the common people. We are told of two things that Mary did at His birth. "She

wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and she laid Him in a manger." Of Joseph we are told that "he called His name Jesus," the name revealed to him by the angel in the dream; revealed to Mary by Gabriel also at the Annunciation; Jesus, "the Saviour," the name sung by the angels on the night of the Nativity, the name which seems to have been the most expressive to the heavenly hosts, when He who had been known to them throughout the ages as Christ the Lord came in to this lost and wandering and bewildered world of ours. The "swaddling clothes," the swathing folds of linen wrapped round the little helpless Babe, are mentioned twice; as the mother's first ministry of love to her child, and as part of the announcement to the shepherds from heaven.

There is something wonderfully touching in those homely words from the voice of these citizens of that ancient world to which ours is such a late birth of time. "Sons of the morning" mighty and majestic, with a life dated by the chronology of the stars, yet ever young, it moves us at once to tears and smiles when they speak

thus in tender detail of our common clothes and food, our "garments" and "sandals," and bring us the "cruse of water" and the "little cake," as they do in the lovely old Bible stories; and now, on this night of the Nativity, in the proclamation of the King of Kings, it moves us to the heart to hear the angelic voice add the homely words, "Thou shalt find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

They know and care about our poor earthly needs, those needs to which they now see their eternal Lord submitting. For while in the crowded caravanserai the mother and Joseph were watching over the Babe in the manger, on the mountains outside, the multitude of the heavenly armies have been proclaiming His Advent to the world, and announcing to the shepherds how the source of their joy and the centre of their worship lay in the manger, swathed by His mother's tender hands, the joy of His mother's heart. Down from the hills to the crowded inn "the shepherds came and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger."

And "when they had seen it they made known abroad the saying that was told them of the Child. And all that heard it wondered: and the shepherds returned to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told them by the angel." The little city, the mountains, the heavens rang with those wondrous tidings of great joy. But from Mary's lips no word is recorded. Her Magnificat had been sung, and now the angels had taken up the strain, and again the silence falls on the inner world of Mary's heart. She "held fast these things and pondered them," revolving them and gathering them together in the depths of her heart and holding a conference with herself.

Another incident belongs to Bethlehem. It was thither that "the wise men from the East" were guided by the star. The angels reveal the manger of Bethlehem to the great majority of our race, the toilers, the multitudes, the labourers on other men's fields, for other men's flocks. The stars reveal it to the wide world outside through the "wise" men watching the heavens.

From the complex thought and mystic speculations of the meditative East the wise men are led to Bethlehem; from the aspirations of man to the manifestation of God, and they find it in the "little child."

"Seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy, and coming into the house, they found the Child, with Mary His mother, and falling down they worshipped Him." They sought the solution of the problems of the ages, and found it in the Babe. And having received all they sought, they offered to Him all they had. They had brought their most precious treasures from the far East. "And when they were come into the house they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshipped Him, and when they had opened their treasures they offered unto Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh."

It might have seemed to Mary as if the golden age had come, the golden age which the prophets of her people alone placed in the future and not in the past. Paradise seemed regained for man, and heaven opened. The angels of

God came and went between earth and heaven. All nations seemed gathering around the throne of the infant King. And yet we know that immediately after that offering from the eastern sages, the angel came with the warning message to Joseph.

"The wise men departed to their own country another way"—"and when they were departed, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him. And when he arose he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed into Egypt."

Close on the welcomes and the festivity follow the peril and the exile, the first touch of the sword that was to pierce Mary's heart through her Son.

VI.

The Welcome in the Temple and the Flight into Egypt.

IT seems impossible to fit in chronologically the narratives of St. Luke and St. Matthew.

It is like trying to make a perfect picture out of the fragments of an ancient mosaic of which some pieces are lost. If we insist on joining the remaining pieces together without gaps, the pieces must be shattered, and the picture must lose its proportions and be distorted. The narrative of St. Matthew speaks of the threatened massacre of the Innocents, the escape of the Holy Family into Egypt and of years spent in exile there. The narrative of St. Luke would give the impression that after

the Purification and the Presentation in the Temple, which must have occurred in less than two months after the Nativity, the Holy Family returned to Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. In a vain attempt to piece together the chronology, we should be in danger of losing the pathetic contrasts and the wide horizons of the picture.

The infancy of our Lord has been linked with heaven, with the wide spaces of the heathen world, the great religious aspirations of the "brooding East," and now with the ancient prophecies of the Jewish nation. The Divine revelation has opened heaven, has come as a solution of the speculations and a response to the aspirations of the meditative East; and now it is seen to rest on the divine foundations, to grow through the human evolutions of the ancient Jewish faith and history. The angels and the armies of heaven peal forth their songs of adoring and sympathetic joy; the music vibrates from the stars of heaven; the shepherds come to give the worship which is all they have to give; the treasures of the East are poured

out before the Child; and now from the voices of Hebrew prophet and prophetess once more arises an evening song of rest and peace, blending with the exulting réveillée of the new morning.

It is most significant and touching that the young mother from Nazareth, with the child Jesus, are welcomed in the ancient Temple of her race by an aged man and an aged woman, representatives of the great religion whose flower is at last dying and ripening into the long expected fruit;—representatives of the great nation, whose own exceptional glory was through that Child to expand and brighten into the universal light "to lighten all the nations" of the world. The blending of the holy old age of Zacharias and Elisabeth, of Simeon and Anna, with the youth of the Virgin and the childhood of our Lord is a most touching picture for all who love, as well as a most impressive sign for all who think. Hope, the hope of Israel and the world, had indeed never been quenched through the long years of delay in these two aged ones, who met the child Jesus in the Temple. Not

seldom, indeed, in days of transition, of social disturbance and religious doubt, it is the young who are despairing and pessimistic ; it is the old who keep the old lamp of hope still burning fresh in their hearts—the old who have seen so many assaults against the faith which seemed to be irresistible cannonades battering down the walls, prove to be mere hailstorms, which after clattering against the stones, and perhaps displacing some that are crumbling and need removing, melt away into the common soil and are forgotten.

Of all the pictures in the story of Mary, of birth and death, and self-sacrificing love with its joys and sorrows, on which Christian art has spent it noblest powers, none surely is more pathetic than this of the old man taking the infant from the young mother's arms into his own, and blessing God and breaking forth into that hymn of fulfilled hope and perfect rest which is sung, as a twin hymn with the Magnificat, in the quiet Evensong of so many of the churches throughout Christendom. All the past of Israel embraces all the future of the Catholic Church

in that meeting, and, as in some arctic mid-summer-night, the glow of sunset melts into the radiance of dawn.

And yet the dear, simple, personal story is by no means to be dissolved into a cloud of mere symbolism and allegory.

"When the days of her Purification were accomplished, according to the law of Moses, they brought Him to the Temple." Throughout the narrative, the two, the mother and that just man who so loyally guarded her and the Child, are closely associated. They brought Him to present Him to the Lord in the Temple, like Hannah the Jewish mother of old.

"They offered the sacrifice according to that which is in the Law." No doubt it was their very best. And their very best was the offering of the poor, tenderly suggested for those who could not afford the lamb; the turtle doves and young pigeons, whose soft cooings are the music of every wood and copse in their country. "And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, the same man was just and devout"; the two great commandments, love to God and man,

were written on his heart. There was also a woman, a widowed woman, who had been waiting long years, in quenchless hope, for the Consolation of Israel, which was to be the Redemption of the world—"which departed not from the Temple, but served God with fasting and prayers, night and day." It was promised Simeon that "he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ." And now, at last, the long waiting was over. "He came by the Spirit into the Temple." And the Consolation of Israel was there. "And when the parents of the child Jesus brought Him into the Temple to do for Him after the custom of the law," the old man took Him in his arms, and blessed God, and sang the third birthday hymn of Christendom, which was also his own death song: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace"—("now settest Thou Thy servant free in peace"; it is the word used when the Sanhedrin set the Apostles free from prison), "For mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation." Death has been changed from the dissolution of life into the liberation into life. And then, as in all these morning

songs of Christendom, the Magnificat of Mary and the Benedictus of Zacharias, the singer soars above his own individual joy and liberation, to the universal light and joy of all, penetrating even beyond the high hopes of his nation, through all the barriers of the Temple, to the whole world of the nations beyond, the infinite heaven of light above, "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." "And Joseph and His mother marvelled at those things that were spoken of Him." At every step the wonder deepened, and the horizon expanded around them.

The proclamation, "*He shall reign on the throne of His father David*," "*He shall be called the Son of the Highest*," had made melody in the heart of Mary, from the lips of the angel Gabriel. The promise of salvation from the source of all evil, "He shall save His people *from their sins*," had been given by the angel to Joseph, in a dream; the glad tidings of great joy to "all the people" had been sung by the armies of heaven to the shepherds. But now, through this old man's lips, the veil is lifted yet

higher, the horizon widens yet further, to the height of Abraham's hope—"In Him shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Yet it is exactly then, at that moment, on that very summit of wonder and joy that the shadow falls which had to follow that great light. "Simeon blessed them," but on the benediction of the aged lips follows the tender warning to the mother, that when she found this, her transcendent joy, lead her down into the depths of transcendent sorrow, she might not for a moment think the way was lost.

"Behold," he said, "this child is set for the fall and resurrection of many in Israel; and for a sign that shall be spoken against; *Yea a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also*, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Those glad tidings of great joy could not but become a test, a test to every heart and life on which they fell, revealing its nature and character; a message of life to what was living, and of death to what was decaying. And for her, whose life was identified with that of the Son, it was needful to know that the kingdom of God

was not to glide into the world on soft wings of peace. It was to conquer its subjects one by one. The king was not to bring in His kingdom with a triumphal procession, amid "Hails" and "Hosannas." He was to win it through fire and sword; fire endured, and sword which smote Him to the heart. And the sword which took the life of the Son could not but pierce the heart of the mother. She would never flinch; but it was well that she should know what was to come. With the supreme joy, she had accepted all its shadows of grief. Her "*behold the handmaid of the Lord*" had meant not only a trustful reception of Divine grace, or a gentle submission to the Divine commandments, but the resolute launching of her whole being on the Divine will. But Simeon's mysterious warning must have added a heavy weight to the "sayings" that Mary "pondered in her heart," for the child and for herself. She could not doubtless imagine a sword which would pierce her heart except through His; and this sword was to be the heavy ruthless sword of battle, and it was to pierce quite through her heart.

The words of hope from Anna, the aged woman (namesake of the Hebrew mother whose joy had overflowed in the ancient Magnificat), as "she spoke of the redemption of Israel" must have been needed to revive Mary's heart. The sword soon fell in terrible reality in the massacre of the Innocents.

There had to be a flight into Egypt, and a time of exile there. It was not the stately Egypt of the Pharaohs but the distracted Egypt left by the successors of Alexander, a restless land of metaphysical speculation and turbulent insurrections to which they fled. But to the Holy Family it was a place of refuge.

The earliest years of the child Jesus were spent under the shadow of the most ancient civilization in the world, in one of the most restless whirlpools of what was then the most modern thought of the world.

The statues of the ancient gods, and of the kings of the thousands of years of Egyptian dynasties, were sitting enthroned on the plains or by the river side, majestically surveying the land, or enshrined in the depths of the rocky

temples, sanctuary within sanctuary, probably even then buried in the sand which has been the salt of their preservation. The Pyramids and the Sphinx were there in all their mystery and majesty, their secrets probably less deciphered then than now.

For the world into which the child Jesus was born was no age of quaint mediaeval credulity or slumbering ignorance, but one of the most restless, sceptical, despairing, cynical eras the world has known. Nevertheless, for the Holy Family the flight into Egypt is doubtless not untruly represented by the ideal pictures of the motherly tenderness of Mary and the fatherly care of Joseph watching over the helpless babe.

"And when Herod the king was dead they returned to Nazareth."

VII.

NAZARETH.

"THEY returned to Nazareth," Joseph and the mother and the child Jesus, where the thirty years folded in the impenetrable veil of silence were to be spent. The scenery of that home at Nazareth helps to fill up the silence of those unrecorded years. That little quiet valley among the Galilean hills is not a mere upland hollow, detached among the mountains, it is a creek of the great plain of Esdraelon. You enter it through a narrow pass, by the village well still known as the Fountain of the Virgin. When you reach the village, the pass through which you enter closes behind you, and the valley which cradled the childhood of our Saviour seems to lie shut in from the outer world. White houses nestle in the bottom of the valley, and on one side climb the hills,

which at that place are steep and craggy, "the hill on which the city was built." The hill sides are cut into terraces of olive-gardens and vineyards. From the breezy heights above, the land stretches before you from the sea to the desert. On the west the landscape opens, hill beyond hill, with villages, cornfields and olive groves, and Carmel stretching its green and wooded heights into the blue Mediterranean, while the golden line of the Tyrian sands borders the purple waves of the Great Sea. On the opposite side is the isolated, symmetrical hill of Tabor, dotted thickly with trees on its green, lawny slopes up to its summit. And beyond is Hermon, and, again, beyond the deep valley where the Jordan flows, rise in undulating lines the distant hills of Gilead. The great battle-fields of the national history are around: the plain of Jezreel; the hills down which swept the conquering hosts of Deborah and Barak; Carmel, where Elijah fought his victorious battle alone, with the worshippers of Baal. The breezy, quiet hills are fresh with the air from the sea, and aromatic with the fragrant thyme which the bees of the

land of milk and honey love. In the foldings of those hills are many quiet nooks, as lonely as the "desert place" to which our Lord loved, in after years, to go "a great while before it was day" to pray. Just around the shoulder of the steep which Nazareth climbs you lose every trace of the village. Lovely wild flowers grow on the heights, wild convolvulus, sea pink, delicate little blue blossoms like nemophila, brilliant scarlet poppies; or, earlier in the year, the many-coloured anemones, of which the lips of the "greater than Solomon," who grew up among them, said that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The little houses lie nestled below the height, each with its courtyard, where the women grind the meal for the household bread, the two or three simple rooms, the house-tops, where corn and fruit are spread to dry. From below comes up the quiet hum of labour, the blows of the carpenter's hammer, or the sound of the carpenter's saw.

No local name is engraven more deeply on Christian history than Nazareth. It meets us on every side; it becomes the habitual designation

of our Lord. The cry "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by," on the lips of the multitude of Jericho, wakens the blind man to hope. When all the city of Jerusalem is stirred with the Hosannas of the triumphal entry and asks "Who is this?" the multitude with the palm branches say "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." When the band of the chief priests came with swords and staves to take Him in Gethsemane, and He went forth and said unto them "Whom seek ye?" they answered "Jesus of Nazareth."

When, in that last night at the High Priest's palace, one of the maids stedfastly looking on Peter recognized him as a disciple, she said, "Thou also wast with the Nazarene Jesus."

Pilate wrote the name of Nazareth upon the Cross.

And from the opened heavens the familiar name is heard once more, from the lips of the ascended Lord, identifying Himself once more with His suffering disciples, answering the "Who art Thou Lord?" of St. Paul, with the "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest."

Not only Jesus the Son of Man, but "Jesus of

Nazareth." The Jesus of the home and of the workshop; the old familiar home name never forgotten, the old toils remembered in heaven, the old familiar, despised name once inscribed by alien hands on the Cross, now bound around His brow by His own hands, among the many titles and the many crowns. From the heaven where He dwells, and intercedes, and reigns, the last word we hear spoken by that human voice is the name of Nazareth, linking our human homes with His Father's house, linking heaven with the sacred family life in our human homes.

After the brief flash which illuminates His finding by Joseph and Mary in the Temple it is written, "He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject unto them"; "and Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man."

Subjection and growth; the holy life developing like a lovely flower, ripening into perfect fruit, winning love and honour from all around, the time of conflict not being yet come. Growth through subjection to the Divine order, and the law of life, through the obedience of

the home, the training in the manual labour of the calling, in the reverent fulfilment of the Divine religious laws and rituals of the race; fulfilling in each stage of life the life of that stage, instead of restlessly struggling into the next stage or wistfully striving to prolong the past.

How eloquent beyond all speech are those silent years, graving deep into the heart of all the centuries the majestic patience of God, the meaning of what seem His "long tarryings," the noiseless growth through His "leisures"; graving deep into the hearts of all the significance and sacredness of the common life of all men, especially in the two elements which make so much of it—*home*, and *work*.

Our common human homes; our common manual labour; the Holy Family; the carpenter's shop; the assembling together on sacred days, in a sacred place, to listen to sacred scriptures. This is what Nazareth means: the word written by Pilate on the Cross, spoken by the risen and victorious Lord from heaven.

Home: the Divine creation of the family, in

the wilderness, to restore the lost Paradise amidst the waste.

Work: the beneficent sentence on the exiles from Paradise, to turn the curse of the wilderness into a blessing for the wilderness, and for the man who was to till it in the sweat of his brow; the *synagogue*, in its ideal, the *gathering together* of all the households, in the common worship of the nation, in the union with the One God. Not "in the desert" was the childhood of the Son of Man spent, but in Mary's home; not on "locusts and wild honey" was He fed; not apart or exceptional was His training, Who was "made in all things like unto us." Before He went forth on His solitary way of redemption, "treading the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with Him," through the three years of ministry and the three hours of darkness and anguish, for thirty years He abode amongst the common people, beside them and amongst them, in the little village of Nazareth.

Day by day for thirty years, in the home, in a village carpenter's workshop. He did not dwell in the high places of the earth, and go

down from these from time to time to help and sympathize with those below. He dwelt in the low places among the majority; one of themselves; sharing the common lot and the common toil. So that they said of Him not only "Is not this the carpenter's Son?" but "Is not this the carpenter?"

And thus for ever He has sanctioned and consecrated labour, toil that tires and taxes hand and brain, as not an exceptional accident, but the normal condition of our race.

It is only by patient enumeration, by counting over as it were in our hearts the three hundred and sixty-five mornings and evenings, one by one, and multiplying them by those thirty years at Nazareth, that we can get their full significance into our minds.

The problems of capital and labour are all encountered and solved, if we will consider it, in that village home and that carpenter's shop at Nazareth.

No book of the Law could have been possessed in that lowly dwelling. On the Sabbath day, "as His custom was," He went into the syna-

gogue; and there, when the hour came, He taught so that all men wondered. He must often have listened to prophecies of which He was the object and fulfilment and been silent. Yet, although the condition of carpenter of Nazareth was that of the majority, the lot of genuine toil and manual labour, it was no servile life, there was no exclusion from it of the possibilities of mental culture which are indeed rights of all men. We know that the training of Jesus included not only reading, but writing, that He was familiar with the sacred books they gave Him to read, and that the scribes, though not recognizing Him as having learned and graduated in their schools, could not deny that, by whatever means the knowledge had been acquired, He "knew letters."

And Mary watched all this: the increasing in wisdom and stature, in favour with God and man; the thirty years of silence must have been to the mother years of unutterable joy. Daily she saw the spirit "waxing strong"; she dwelt with Him who loved God and man perfectly, from whose lips not one light or harsh word ever

issued, in whose sinless soul every grace of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control abode, not in conflict but in an undisputed home, whose delight it was to do all that to fallen man is so difficult, and in whose pure, human heart she held a mother's place. Let us fill to the brim the cup of her blessedness. We speak of Edens upon earth, homes of love and peace, but if ever Paradise was restored on earth, it was in that Galilean home of poverty and toil; for there the second Adam dwelt, the Lord from heaven; there the "despised and rejected of men" was "in favour with man"; there the "man of sorrows" rested in the favour of God. He Himself, in the home, on the lonely hill-side, in the streets of Nazareth, was the Shechinah of the Temple of God. And in that Holy of Holies Mary dwelt.

VIII.

The Home and the Temple.

THIRTY years of the brief life of thirty-three on earth, spent in the fulfilment of our common lot, the consecration of labour and of home. The consecration of labour, by making it a sacred, daily ritual of service to God and man; the consecration of home, not only by making its own fountains sweet, but by opening them to the world around.

All the natural human relationships are for our Lord gathered into that to His mother; and in the motherhood of Mary we see, not only her exceptional transcendent joys and sorrows, but the ideal of all true motherhood. The relationship, the love is immortal. But the *home*, the special *phases* of the relationship must be transitory and mortal, as all things organic and living are mortal; the flower dying into the

fruit it enfolds; the fruit dying from the seed it nourishes; the seed dying into the new life it contains.

The home which would continue, if it were possible, to be the permanent centre of all its inmates would cease to be a true home of training and growth. And yet there must be some tender pang in all the changes, especially for those who stay behind.

All growth involves sacrifice; the expansion of life means the passing away of the husk which once sheltered it. It is the power of life not of death which pushes off last year's dead leaves; every Autumn is only the herald of another Spring; yet there is a pain in seeing the flowers decay and the dead leaves fall.

And the home at Nazareth could be no exception to the common law of human life. On the contrary, by the very power of the Divine, redeeming, renewing life within it the expansion must be more rapid, the dying into the higher life more complete.

The motherhood of Mary had no exemption from the sacrifice essential to all motherhood

worthy of the name. On the contrary, she must have drunk deeper of that cup than any other mother could. The life she had brought into the world was so perfect in every stage, and must have been a source of such unbroken and transcendent joy to her, that the passing away of every stage must have had its own especial pain.

After the twelve earliest years, the veil is lifted from the sacred home for a moment; and it is the moment of the passing of childhood into youth. That transition must come in all homes, the necessary detaching of each new individuality, the gradual dawning of altogether a new life; the first foreshadowings that the new life is to make its own new world; the first indications that the child is not to be "a new edition corrected and amended" of the parents, nor a supplement; but altogether a new book; the moment of necessity for the freedom of personal development, on the generous recognition of which so much of the future relation between parent and child depends.

For twelve years the child Jesus had been

"growing strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him."

His parents went up to Jerusalem every year, at the feast of the Passover. "And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast." The ancient ritual gained a tender sacredness by linking its most solemn feasts with family life; its great national and religious festivals were also joyous family gatherings.

The Passover journeys of the provincial families, kinsfolk and friends, from the villages and towns on the hill sides and on the sea coasts, over the mountains and along the valleys of Galilee and Judæa, green with young corn and gay with the crimson and gold of the spring flowers—parents and children, young and aged, drawn by a common patriotism and religion to the beautiful city and temple of their race, must have been a time of much joy and gladness.

"And when they had fulfilled the days in Jerusalem they returned, and the child Jesus" (boy, son, it is no longer childhood but youth)

"tarried behind in Jerusalem—and Joseph and His mother knew not of it."

They seem to have felt no anxiety at first. The company was large and friendly.

"They went a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance." Then the anxiety and "sorrowful seeking" began. Sorrowful, but most certainly with no fear that He had disregarded them, or broken from the ceaseless, loving obedience of all His life.

And at last, after three days, they find Him in the Temple, in one of its many chambers, among the Doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions.

His absence must therefore have been His own choice. It came on them evidently with a shock of surprise as well as pain. The accredited Doctors of the people were "greatly astonished" at His comprehension and His replies. "And when His mother and Joseph saw Him they were amazed." The word is emphatic, the same used to express the wonder of the crowd, who saw the healing of the dumb, possessed child after the Transfiguration.

"And His mother said to Him, 'Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us?'" So altogether new and inconceivable it was to them that He should do anything without the most loyal obedience, and tender reference to them. She abandons her usual reticence; there is surely a tone of reproach and of wistful remonstrance, however tender, in the words.

She speaks of the sorrow with which they had sought Him as of a new travail and birth-pang. His reply was no confession or apology. It was the resolute opening of an altogether new door, the rising to a new stage of life. "Wherefore did ye seek Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" in My Father's House.

The old, familiar walls of the home must have melted away like mist at those words. His real home, His Father's house, was the Temple of God; His "Father's business" and His own, the redeeming and renewing of the world. And very pathetic is the account of how they received that reply. "They understood not the saying which He spake unto them." The high purpose

of His life was manifested; the old familiar home at Nazareth was merely a porch of the Temple. "He went down with them as of old to Nazareth and was subject to them," as always. But those words, if not at first understood, were never forgotten. It was His mother's wont, as we know, to keep all these sayings and ponder them in her heart; the songs and sayings of the angels, the sayings of the shepherds, of the wise men from the far East, of Anna the prophetess, the song and sayings of Simeon. Perhaps now first she began to understand that dark saying of Simeon, after his song of rapturous welcome, "*Yea a sword shall pierce through thine own heart also.*" The sword had begun to touch her own heart, but she made no further effort to turn it aside.

For eighteen years the silence falls again on Mary and the home at Nazareth, but when once more it is withdrawn at the marriage feast of Cana, we find that all these sayings had indeed sunk down into her heart, and that she understood and accepted all.

IX.

The Marriage Feast and the Beginning of Miracles.

THE home at Nazareth was indeed broken up at last. From the absence of any further mention of the name of Joseph, it would seem as if the support of his loyal care and guardianship was gone. If any companionship is mentioned around Mary henceforth, it is not that of Joseph, but of "the brethren," or of the disciples.

Jesus had come to be baptized of John, the Son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, in Jordan. He had been proclaimed by the lips of the Forerunner as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

He had been accepted by the men of Bethsaida, Andrew, Peter and Philip as the Messiah; by

Nathanael from the neighbouring village of Cana. He had been acknowledged as Son of God and King of Israel. The full chorus of His glory had rung out at once, at the beginning.

And now there was a marriage in Cana, Nathanael's village, "and the mother of Jesus was there." "And Jesus was called with His disciples to the marriage"; not from the mountain home at Nazareth, but from the great public gathering at the Jordan; not with His kinsfolk and acquaintance, but as the Master with His disciples.

It was once more a "beginning"; and as at the beginning of the life at Bethlehem, at the beginning of the recognition of those who were waiting for Redemption in the Temple, and again at the beginning of the wider range of life, of the taking up the Father's work in Jerusalem "among the Doctors,"—the mother was there.

And beautiful it is to observe that it was through her gentle interceding that the beginning of ministry became the "beginning of miracles."

There is, perhaps, too much of a tendency to

regard the character and work of the Blessed Mother as altogether passive and negative. She suffered so much and so silently, and withdrew herself from observation so habitually, that it is all the more a duty and delight to recognize the weight and significance of her few recorded words.

The full range of her power was indeed shown at once in the compass of the *Magnificat*. But brief as the words are that we are told she spoke at the marriage of Cana, there are in them as perfect a pattern of prayer, and of practical teaching, as we can have. Well, indeed, do they show how fully she had learned the lesson of the "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business," how fully she had grown to understand Him who spoke.

She had learned that no human need was too small for Him to sympathize with, or too great for Him to satisfy. She did not fear to ask Him to add a joy to a feast, a feast doubtless of the poor, who had given their best, as the poor do, and had no more to give. Probably she did not imagine any more than she dictated

what His help would be, or how He would give it. But she was not surprised when His benefaction proved to be an act of creation.

Libraries of books of devotion are being piled up from century to century, from hour to hour, each one perhaps helping to teach one or another how to pray. But in this prayer of Mary's we have a pattern of the prayer of intercession which embraces all. It is a petition of charity, of neighbourly loving-kindness, and sympathy, quick to perceive a want, quick to find and provide the remedy. Dante gives it as an example of charity, the virtue contrary and destructive to envy—

> "E verso noi volar furon sentiti,
> Non però visti, spiriti, parlando
> Alla mensa d' amor cortesi inviti.
> La prima voce che passò volando,
> *Vinum non habent*, altamente disse[1]."

She lays the want before Him, confident that He is willing, sure that He is able to help, content to wait His time and accept His way of helping.

[1] *Purgatorio*, xiii. 25.

As afterwards the sisters of Bethany in their prayer of agony, "He whom thou lovest is sick," she simply "makes known the request." The mother of Jesus said unto Him "*They have no wine.*" Hers was a petition of generous sympathy, as theirs of agonized distress, and we need the example of both.

There is as much danger of our abstaining from prayer because the things needed seem too small, as because they seem too great and difficult. Her prayer was without rhetoric, because deep below this petition was the continual prayer, always launched in full acquiescence on the will of God. We know this by the way she received the answer. "*Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come,*" may sound to us chilling and repelling. Mary seems to have felt it not as a rejection but simply a delay for the best reasons. On her heart those words seem to have cast no chill, not even a shadow of doubt.

The mother and Son understood each other. His "hour was not yet come."

That was all she wanted to know.

She did not want to choose her own hour, or to anticipate His. When His hour had come she knew His work would be done; and she knew it would be the right hour, the right moment. All she had to do was to see that the instruments were ready when He was ready to use them. Prayer, with Mary, inspired action, did not supersede it.

From the model prayer she passes to the model sermon; as brief, and as entirely to the point—"His mother said unto the servants, '*Whatever He saith unto you do it*';" the most practical sermon possible. It rings down through the ages in the Blessed Mother's voice. If we obey it as those servants at the marriage feast who first heard it did; if, when He speaks and says "fill the waterpots," we "fill them up to the brim," we shall find this "beginning of miracles" virtually repeated again and again in our own lives: we shall find perplexities vanish, needs supplied; the water transubstantiated into the wine that maketh glad the heart of man.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and His disciples" (those who

were ready to learn), did learn, and "believed on Him."

But always we must rejoice to remember that it was at the suggestion of His mother that this beginning of miracles was wrought, and that she saw the manifestation of the glory and rejoiced in the faith to which it led.

X.

The Home of Mary expanding into the Church of Christ.

AGAIN the silence falls over the life of Mary.

After this beginning of miracles, at which it was given her to be present and to serve, the home at Nazareth seems to have been broken up. It is said that after the marriage feast at Cana, "Jesus, His mother, His brethren and His disciples came down to Capernaum, which is on the sea coast." Capernaum and the Sea of Galilee, bordering on so many territories, with its fortified royal cities, its fishing towns, and its commerce, became the centre of the ministry.

St. Luke gives us the story of the rejection which led to His leaving Nazareth. He went

to Nazareth where He had been brought up, where the gladness and beauty of His childhood and youth, of His home life of labour and service. His growth in wisdom and power of character had been known, where He had increased year by year in favour with God and man, before the years of battle with the wrongs and falsehoods of the world, especially the religious world, had begun. He came back to it after His reception as the Christ of God at the Jordan, and the manifestation of His glory at Cana. "As was His custom, He went into the synagogue, and the book of the prophet Isaiah was given into His hands to read. He unrolled it." We have few notices so detailed of any of His everyday acts. "He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

"And He rolled up the scroll and gave it

back to the officer of the synagogue." And there was a silence, and "every eye was fastened on Him." "This day," he said, "is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." Then, evidently, began the cavils, the small envies of the little village community. "Is not this the son of Joseph, the carpenter?" The spirit of detraction which could find no point to assail in His life or character fastened on His station. There was also, probably, a jealousy mixed with a cynical incredulity as to the miracles He was reported to have done elsewhere. If elsewhere, "why not here in Thine own country?"

He felt the weight of the petty resistance. "He could do no great miracle there." He only "laid hands on a few sick folk and healed them." And then He rose to the full height—He spread before them the full breadth—of His mission. He revealed to them how beyond all the special election of their race, and through all the patriotic fervour of their prophets, glimpses had been given of wider horizons, of a universal light which was to lighten all the nations.

"Many widows were in Israel," He said, "in

the days of Elijah (Elias) the prophet, but unto none of them was Elijah sent but to a widow of Sarepta, a city of Sidon."

"Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Elisha (Eliseus) the prophet, and none of them was cleansed save Naaman the Syrian."

"Then the whole multitude arose in wrath and led Him to the brow of the hill, on the sides of which the city was built, and would have thrown Him headlong, but He, passing through the midst of them, went His way." That was the tragedy which closed the life of perfect grace and wisdom at Nazareth. The time for an easy acknowledgement of inoffensive goodness was over. The time for "rising" or "falling," receiving or rejecting the Redeemer of mankind had come; and Nazareth, the city where He had been brought up, rejected Him, and fell. Such a close of those thirty blameless years must have pierced deep into the heart of the mother. It may help to explain the only further glimpse we have of her during His ministry.

In our joy at the gracious words out of His mouth, which are to us spirit and life, we perhaps

scarcely realize the tremendous severity and keen point of His denunciations of all pretences and hollownesses. With all His compassionate gentleness; the reverence for the national ritual, the respect for ancient laws and customs, the refusal to interfere with external arrangements of property or anything else, the Pharisees were right in their perception that the doctrine He taught with such absolute authority, and sealed with such divine signs manual of miraculous acts of mercy, was no less than revolutionary as regarded themselves and their teaching, splitting in pieces their elaborate constructions by sowing within them the imperishable germs of life, which would and did crumble them into dust. From the beginning, His ministry was a life and death struggle. What was attempted on the brow of the hill of Nazareth was carried out three years afterwards on Calvary. It is possible that the mother, with the keen penetration of a mother's love, seeing the peril for Him, may have clung with tender tenacity to the hope that He might yet win the recognition of all, by appealing to the best in all; and, by the gracious attraction of

goodness, gently glide into His kingdom on tides of Divine beneficence and adoring gratitude. It is difficult even after Gethsemane and the Cross not to believe that in every fresh conflict with wrong the victory may be won without the martyrdoms.

The multitude wanted to make Him a king; the religious world were watching and plotting to prove Him a heretic and a revolutionist; His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him. The crowd said, "Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without and call for Thee"; and it is written that, stretching out His hands over the disciples, He said, "*Behold My mother, and My brethren: for whosoever will do the will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother.*"

The home of Mary was indeed expanding into the Church of Christ.

If Mary heard these words, we may be sure that as she pondered them in the silent depths of her heart, to her, they would have been but a further manifestation of His glory, a wider

revelation of the heart whose divine compassion and human tenderness she knew so well.

Those words were meant, she must have felt, not to weaken the reality of His relationship to her, or to shadow the joy of her motherhood; not to unsay the benediction of Gabriel or to silence the rejoicing of her own Magnificat, but only to unseal the fountain and pour it forth as the measure of His love for all thirsting hearts.

We seem to see the mother's eyes, as in that great picture of Raphael's[1], following His outstretched hands over the band of the disciples. We seem to hear her voice responding in the ancient words of the promise, "not to me only, but to us, to you, and you, and you, the Child is born, the Son is given, to you, to each, to all."

> "Chè per quanto si dice più lì *nostro*,
> Tanto possede più di ben ciascuno,
> E più di caritade arde in quel chiostro[2]."

There is one more saying of our Lord's, during His ministry, in reference to His mother, as

[1] The Madonna della Sedia at Florence.

[2] Dante, *Purgatorio*, xv. 55.

significant as any, because reaching down to the eternal principles and foundations of His kingdom.

Moved, it seems, not by His miracles but by His words (the words which revealed the dissolving, destructive force of division), a woman of the company lifted up her voice, in anticipation of the benedictions of all the generations, and said, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee."

The narrative is given us by St. Luke, the evangelist of the Annunciation, of the Nativity, of the home-life at Nazareth.

And Jesus said, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

Certainly in these words He was casting no shadow on the blessedness of Mary in being His mother, He is simply declaring that even for His mother the blessedness consists in what she *is*, rather than in what she *has received*. As in the words to His disciples, "*Behold My mother, My sister, and My brother*"—taking her cup of blessing at the full, He gives it as the measure of the bliss for all the disciples, adding the rule of life which made her blessedness and theirs, "*Who-*

ever shall do the will of God, the same is My mother, and sister, and brother"; so in His response to the generous felicitations of this woman, He fixes our thoughts not only on the fundamental principles of obedience, which are the organizing laws of life and growth in the kingdom, but also on the *gradations of character* which *constitute* the grades and distinctions of its individual especial beatitude.

Most surely the words do not exclude Mary from the blessing; they simply show in what her highest blessedness consisted.

The words might be a motto for her biography.

They certainly do not discrown her; but they show of what material her crown and all the crowns of saintly glory are made. And they do also thus engrave on the heart of the Universal Church, and of every individual disciple for ever, that blessedness consists, not in condition but in character, in what the highest of Divine gifts create within us, not merely in the gifts themselves; not in what life brings us, but in what it makes us; not in what we *have*, but what we *are*.

If, as is possible, it was from Mary herself that

St. Luke learned this incident, as well as the other narratives which could have been learned only from herself, we can feel how entirely her own heart would respond to the words, how joyfully she would send forth from His lips the Beatitude she understood so well. His "*Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it*," had long ago received her Amen, in her "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord*," and her "*whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.*"

XI.

The Cross.

"THERE stood by the Cross of Jesus His mother[1]." At last she was reaping in her own soul the result of her self-sacrificing, self-effacing love. She was *able* to stand by the Cross of her Son. She was able to be there, silent and self-controlled, sharing that utter abandonment of shame and torture, and sharing it, so as to give Him not another pang of anguish but the one only consolation that could be given, the sympathy of perfect, comprehending love. It was indeed maternal love which brought and kept her there; and no one wonders at any sacrifice, any devotion in a

[1] "Stabat Mater ...
Cujus animam gementem
Contristatam et dolentem
Pertransivit gladius."

mother's love, the love which God takes as a type of His own: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

It is *expected* that a mother will comfort when and as none else can.

But for the love even of a mother to be able to suppress its own anguish so as to comfort the sorrow which is also piercing her own heart, demands a strength and a courage upholding the tenderness, and a power of silent endurance, not gained in a moment; and this Mary had been gathering in the silence of her heart through all the thirty-three years.

To the last moment she fulfilled the sacrifice involved in the self-surrender of the first. "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word*" was imprinted on her whole being, from the Annunciation to the Cross.

"All had forsaken Him"; that was indeed the reason of reasons why she should not! To stand in the midst of that mocking crowd, to face that cruel multitude, cruel through fear and hatred, cruel through blinded weakness; to see

everything He had promised and expected seem to fail, every denunciation of His worst enemies seem to prove true; to see Him tortured in body, betrayed and broken in heart, darkened in spirit, and not to be able to give one touch of alleviation or one word of sympathy, nothing but the comfort of being beside Him there; and yet not to add to His anguish by any complaining of her own,—this must indeed have taxed all the strength those years had gathered. She could not even lift the sponge with the vinegar to the parched lips.

It could have been only the constant conquering of self by faith and love throughout her life which gave her strength for those hours of silent agony.

She had accepted every thwarting of her own will, every sacrifice of her fondest wishes to His work; in the losing and finding in the Temple; at the marriage at Cana; day by day in subsequent years, as she watched His career, heard the plottings of His enemies, knew of the fickleness of the multitude and the distrust of His brethren, and saw the peril deepening

around Him ; or she could not have stood at the Cross silent and uncomplaining now.

We must not forget one of that little band, faithful amidst a faithless world. Family affection was there. Beside the mother stood the mother's sister. And Mary Magdalene was there ; the two furthest extremes of womanhood, attracted and united by His love, at His Cross. The blameless, blessed Mother, blessed by Gabriel from the presence of God ; blessed by the aged Elisabeth as she that believed ; blessed from youth to age and through all generations ; and the Magdalene, rescued from the verge of the outer darkness, lifted from the lowest depth to the highest height ; they stand before us side by side for ever.

And John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was there ; the deepest love, like hers, able best to lose its own anguish for His sake in His. But for St. John that little faithful band, close to the Cross, would have been entirely hidden from us. St. Luke mentions no women as present at the Crucifixion. St. Matthew and St. Mark speak of the women watching Him from afar off. But

for those four sentences of St. John, that last immortal picture of the Blessed Mother beside her Son, those last words of the Son to the mother would have been lost.

But now they stand for ever before us side by side, together, apart from all the world, not afar off; close enough to catch His last dying gaze, His last dying words; not outside, seeking to save Him, but close to His heart, knowing He could not because He would not save Himself; sharing as far as human love could share in the agony which saved the world.

It is interesting to trace the points of resemblance between the mother and the disciple which brought these two together at the last on Calvary.

To no small phlegmatic nature did our Lord entrust His mother, but to one large and fervent as her own. His also is evidently no slight, flexible, easily-moulded character, springing to its perfection in a moment. His life also was marked by silences when others were ready to speak, the silence of lips capable of the most eloquent speech, of the voice of one who could

be the "Son of Thunder." At the Transfiguration, at the Master's midnight treading of the waves in Galilee, throughout the last conversations on the night of the betrayal, and in the morning by the Sea of Galilee, after the resurrection, his voice is not heard. But he so listened as to give us the inner secret and significance of parable and miracle as none else did. The Evangelist who preserves to us his Lord's words about the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Water of Life, the True Vine, the Washing of the Feet, must, like Mary, have kept many things and pondered them in his heart whilst others were speaking. For whatever else united these two and brought them together at the Cross, the bond which made all other ties indissoluble, the true, living, eternal tie between them was nothing less than the supreme, all-mastering, central love to Christ: love, which always finds reasons for doing the hardest things and rendering the most painful services which anything but love finds excellent reasons to escape.

Watching, learning, meekly accepting contradiction, keeping all sayings from Him and about

Him they loved in their hearts, these two blessed ones found their way at last that day to the Cross together; and they alone of all the world stand consecrated by the last words of recognition from His lips.

How this little faithful band were gathered together at that moment we know not; perhaps they scarcely knew themselves: but they were drawn by the mighty power of the supreme, dying love.

How the Mother pressed through that turbulent, maddened crowd to its centre in the Cross we know not. How, and in what companionship she left, we know. But there she stood, in that place of shame and torture; yet doubtless the only place in all the world where her heart could have found any rest amidst its anguish. And there she stayed through the six hours of anguish. No true mother, once there, could have left till the last breath was yielded up, the last pang endured, the last word of patience spoken, least of all *that* mother.

She was there when the three hours of darkness passed. She must have been there when they

began. It was when the darkness was passing that "Jesus saw His mother and the disciple standing by whom He loved."

Three hours of pitiless daylight, amidst the bitter mockeries of priest and ruler, terribly to the point; the senseless, echoing cries of the misguided mob; the hard scorn of the Roman soldiers; the mad railing of the malefactors hanging in torture beside Him.

At the beginning of those slow hours she must have seen the benumbing anodyne offered and refused. With no deadened faculties would He pass through that last conflict! And at the end she must have seen the sponge steeped in vinegar, the soldier's common wine (the first touch of natural pity shown Him), held up to the parched lips and accepted, the simplest act of human kindness felt and recognized to the last.

She must have heard the insults which were but unwilling testimonies to His love of man and God. "*He saved others*," "*He trusted in God*." And of all there she must have best known how true that testimony was. She must have heard the cry of the robbers, "*Save Thyself and us*."

And before the daylight passed into that unnatural darkness, she must have seen the dawn of the new day of redemption, the first triumph of the Cross in the broken heart of the penitent thief. She must have heard the "*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom,*" and the royal, Divine response, "*To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*"

That was at the sixth hour.

And then came the three hours of darkness—the hush of awe-stricken silence. The cries of rage and mockery were silenced, and no audible word came from the Cross.

One more time of silence for that steadfast, pondering, silent heart! Did her own Magnificat come back to her in the stillness, and the salutation of Gabriel? In every detail they must have seemed reversed. Where were the "great things" done and promised to her? Where was the "mercy from generation to generation from God on those that feared Him"? What "strength" had been "shown" by that "Almighty Arm" to save His best beloved from uttermost defeat? The "proud" were not

"scattered," but gathered together in arrogant triumph. The "mighty" were not "cast down from their thrones" of false judgment. The rich were satisfied with the humiliation of this peasant of Nazareth. How was the promise of "the throne of David" fulfilled? The title "*King of the Jews*" was indeed inscribed by the Roman governor upon the Cross, but it was merely as a weak defiance to the Jews, the conclusion of the mockery, the sceptre and the purple, of the Roman soldiers.

And yet, through all, we cannot doubt that her faith failed not. It is a sublime tradition that, as at the beginning, the hope of the world was for a time enkindled in that one heart alone of all the world, so at the close there was a moment when the faith of the Church was kept alight only in that one mother's heart[1].

Let us not think of her as merely enduring and resigned. Identified as she was with the sufferer, the Mother of the Redeemer, the Hand-

[1] In the Tenebrae all the lights are extinguished, symbolical of the Apostles, till one only is left alight, the one symbolical of the heart of Mary.

maid of the Lord, her whole being long since habitually given up, not in dull submission, but in loving, rejoicing acquiescence, to the will of God, she was, with reverence be it spoken, sharing in the sacrifice. With the sword piercing quite through her own heart, she was resolute in not hindering her Son, by look or word, from giving Himself for the world He loved. She was suffering with Him, dying with Him, up to the last; until at last came from the edge of the darkness that cry of utter desolation from the Saviour's heart, broken beneath the curse and anguish of the sin of the world, which He alone could bear, and must bear alone, the "*Why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" which must have found so deep an echo in her own soul. Then at last the light came back. And the first sight that light brought to the dying eyes was His mother standing beside Him.

"And when Jesus saw His mother and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, 'Woman, behold thy son!' then saith He to the disciple, 'Behold thy mother!'" Committing to each other those who loved Him best: not certainly to resign His

place in the mother's heart, or set aside her immortal place in His, but to draw together in Himself those who of all the world understood each other best, because they understood and loved Him most.

"From that hour the disciple took her to his own home."

One word more from the dying lips acknowledging the mortal pain of thirst. One more gracious act of the recognition of human pity, accepting the vinegar on the sponge; one more sigh of perfect rest in God, "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit*," and then with a loud voice the proclamation of fulfilment and redemption, "*It is finished!*" And when that word of victory had rung through the silence, the disciple who saw and heard all and told us all, testifying of these things, the one eye-witness to the end among the evangelists, "took her to his own home."

What that home was we are not told. The veil of silence is never withdrawn from it; but we know that from within it came this last vision of the mother by the Cross of her Son.

XII.

"*Mary the Mother of Jesus.*"

AGAIN the silence falls on the life of Mary. Through all the narratives of the burial, the Resurrection and Ascension, her name is not breathed. We are told of the gracious, solitary interview with St. Peter, hidden from all eyes but his and his Lord's. We are not told of any manifestation to the Mother. There was certainly no word of denial to be unsaid, no following afar off to be lamented, no absolution for failing faith or love needed.

In our human biographies it is sometimes too customary to rend every veil and lay bare every sacred solitude.

The danger is, that with the veil banishes also the Shechinah. But the divine biographies keep veiled within the Temple a Holy of Holies, where

only one can enter alone, at one moment; a solitude absolutely sacred to the worshipper, who is its priest, and to God. Such an innermost shrine, such a Holy of Holies we might surely expect to find in the communion between the Mother and her Son. It is remarkable that something of a similar veil of silence is folded around the intercourse after the resurrection between our Lord and that beloved disciple who took His mother as a mother to his own home.

There are conversations recorded of the risen Christ with the Magdalene at the sepulchre, with the two friends on the way to Emmaus, with St. Thomas in the room with the closed doors, with St. Peter by the Sea of Galilee.

But from the lips of St. John only one sentence is given us when in the morning by the Lake he first recognized his Master on the shore and said "It is the Lord," while from the lips of the risen Saviour to him there is not one word.

The craving for the first place on the right hand in the Kingdom had been quenched in

the love of the heart on which he leant at the Last Supper. He was content to follow silent, behind, whilst Peter asked the loving question, which he never thought of asking as to his own destiny. Ambitious, with the ambitions of the Kingdom, impetuous to resent wrong to his Master, eager for the manifestation of His glory as Mary herself at Cana, with all their inward kinship of character to each other, in both, perfect love had learned the lesson of perfect trust and could be content with whatever manifestations the love they trusted gave, or withheld. But if there were any such manifestations of the risen Son to the Mother after the resurrection, it seems of their very essence that they must have been too sacred to be told to any beside.

Once more indeed her name is mentioned by the Evangelist who gives us the narrative of the Annunciation, the meeting with Elisabeth, the Magnificat, the songs of the Angels to the Shepherds, the song of Simeon, the few glimpses of the life at Nazareth, the finding in the Temple. St. Luke carries on the name of Mary from the Gospels into the history of the Church.

The only woman's name that goes on from the fourfold life of Christ into the story of the new creation His life brought into the world is hers. The familiar group of the women of the gospels, of the sisters of Bethany, Salome, Mary Magdalene, and the rest, all vanish from our sight. Only Mary the mother of Jesus is left.

"After the Ascension they returned unto Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet, and when they were come in, they went into an upper room, where abode both Peter and James and John, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James," the eleven of the Apostolic band. And it is added, "these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." Very brief words, but very significant as to the position assigned to woman in the Church and also as to the tender honour and reverence rendered to the Mother of our Lord.

There is no more, but it is enough. As to

her subsequent life on earth and her departure from it, the Holy Scriptures say nothing [1].

The prayer and supplication and the obedient waiting in Jerusalem bore their fruits. They *did* receive power after the Holy Ghost was come upon them. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

Among that company, which were to be the living germ of the new Creation, of the Church which is His body, "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all," was one to whom it had been said long before, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall

[1] There are two touching sculptures of the death of the Blessed Virgin in the shrine by Orcagna in the Or San Michele, at Florence: one of the Saviour standing beside the couch of death, receiving her spirit as a little child into His arms ("figlia del tuo Figlio): the other of the Angel announcing to Mary not the birth of Jesus but her own call into the Heavenly Life, bringing her not the Lily of the Annunciation, but the Palm of Victory, the end of the legend being that the palm was given after her departure to St. John and was buried with him.

overshadow thee," and of her had been born that holy One "Who is called the Son of God."

And now His life was to be perpetuated throughout the ages. A new Birthday for the world had come; a new anointing from the Holy One, never to cease; a new Creation of one immortal, holy, Universal Church, which was to fill up His sufferings in the world, to carry on His victorious work in the world, and anointed by the Spirit of power and love, of patience and hope, was "to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

No mere passive existence of being redeemed and saved was the life of the Church of Christ to be throughout the ages; no mere gliding on a smooth tide into a haven of which He had breasted the breakers; but a perpetual battle of duty and right with perpetually recurring wrong; of love with selfishness; of life with death. And in the foremost rank of those who were thus to suffer and to conquer are mentioned the company of unnamed women, with the one named as

a type of the best in all, "*Mary, the Mother of Jesus.*"

The only woman's name borne on from the History of the Gospels into the History of the Church; the only human name enshrined in perpetual honour in the two great Creeds of Christendom.

From the far-off past in which she lived among the Galilean hills her few sayings and her one song, set in the silences of her steadfast heart and self-sacrificing life, flow down in inspiring music throughout all the generations who have called and ever call her Blessed: her "*Behold the Handmaid of the Lord*," her *Magnificat*, her brief prayer of intercession, her "*Whatsoever He saith unto you do it.*"

But not only from the past.

The Saints do not belong to the Past, but to the Eternal Present, in the Presence of Him Who is the "I am," the First and the Last.

In our Christian Faith there is no land of the dead, peopled by dim shades dwelling in the past. The Hades, the "unseen," is for us the Land of the Living. History has become a con-

tinuity in more senses than one. The *actions* and *thoughts* of the past do indeed live on in the present; the "choir invisible" is ever, in this impersonal sense also, making melody amongst us.

But far more than this, by our Christian belief, the *people* of the past live on in the present, in personal immortality, in vivid personal life. We pray with them daily in the "Our Father," whenever we ask that "the will of God may be done this day on earth," acknowledging that they "*are doing*" it to-day "*in Heaven*."

We sing of them, and with them, in the Te Deum as part of the great Choir of "the Holy Church throughout the World," and certainly by far the larger as well as the higher part; "the goodly fellowship, the glorious company, the noble army, of prophets, Apostles and Martyrs praise," are always praising, "Thee." We sing of them as living "Powers" serving and praising now and evermore. Powers, many of them, trained and perfected[1], through tribulation and conflict

[1] "Doch dieser hat gelernt,
. Er wird uns lehren."
Faust, 2ter Theil. Chor der seligen Knaben.

here below. "*The Heavens and all the Powers therein.*"

Not merely as a revered Name of the Past, but as a living Power of the Eternal Present, is the Virgin Mother blessed throughout all generations; and not less than in the days of old, but inconceivably more, we may be sure she is magnifying the Lord now, rejoicing in God her Saviour, serving Him whose service is the service of the world He loves;—in that "far better" world and infinitely fuller life, where His servants "see His face," and "serve Him day and night in His Temple."

TALITHA CUMI.

Talitha Cumi.

I HAVE been asked to write a letter to you on "True Girlhood"; to you who have still the priceless gift of youth: "Time" before you, for all its possible best uses; "Talents" yet to be invested in the best securities; and my heart goes out to meet the request. My own early days were so helped and inspired by the undimmed enthusiasm for all that is high, and good, and beautiful in the older people around me, that it is a joy to hand that torch on in any way to those who will bear it forward in the long procession, flashing the good tidings of hope and victory from point to point, when we are gone where the torch is not needed, nor the light of the sun to lighten us.

Not that youth, in its highest meaning, is a thing that passes. The glow, the openness of

mind and heart, the expanding horizons, the eagerness to learn, need never pass. Which of us has not had the joy of seeing them live on into quite old age? For what is this whole brief life here on earth, but the youth of learning and of training for the fuller life beyond?

Yet, as our immortal life has its stages, so also has our mortal life here below. There are seasons. "Everything is beautiful in its season." And any season, lost and wasted, can never return; every progressive season used—or wasted—sends its gain or its loss through all the rest. The fullness of summer is impoverished by the failure to plough and sow in spring; the fruits of autumn suffer by neglect of the prunings and waterings of summer. All the seasons live on in those that succeed them. And it is obvious that spring, youth, the season which is still your own, does, more than any determine the character of the rest.

Besides this, each stage of life has its especial ministries. There are services none can render so well as the young. The generous trust and expectation of help from the old, in the young, is

as reviving to the old, as the dependence of the old is hallowing to the young. The mere sight of the bright faces is sunshine to lonely and saddened hearts. The sound of the young voices gladdens like the flow of living waters, making life green again. By the sick-bed, in the hospital, flowers in a girl's hand, songs in a girl's fresh voice, bring something lovelier and sweeter to the heart than what meets the eye or ear.

And the young can surely *teach* the young in a way older people cannot—I do not say with a better or a higher power, but with a *different* power. It is much to hear voices before us on the heights, saying, "We have trodden this way, and we know it leads higher and higher, and is better and better farther on, the difficulties can be conquered, the heights can be scaled." But it is also something inspiring to hear the voices beside us saying not "*Follow*," but "*Come with us.* We are going the same way, step by step, through the same difficulties, past the same dangers, laden with the same burdens, hindered by the same temptations. Let us press on *together*."

In thinking of these few suggestions for which you ask, as to True Girlhood, I turn naturally to those two ancient historical literatures, that one Divinely inspired Book, the Old and New Testaments.

And it is not, I think, fanciful or forced to find, in three instances there indicated, much to help and to guide; typical and universal as those sacred stories are, universal because so genuinely individual.

In the Old Testament we read of "a little captive maid." There are just three verses about her. A vivid flash illumines her story for a moment. And she is there (in the way of these old sacred stories) in an instantaneous photograph for ever. We see her. We know her. She is linked into the great world's history—has entered into the heart of many lives. Think of her; look at the little figure carefully. The hosts of Syria had gone forth on one of their many raids into Palestine. The little maid—at all events little then—a child, captured and brought home to be a slave for ever in the land of her enemies and conquerors. Father, mother,

home, what had become of them all? Probably, by the time we see her, she had reached girlhood; "true girlhood" indeed. Something in the child had made her acceptable to wait personally on one of the great ladies of the land, the wife of the commander-in-chief of the Syrian armies; something sweet and helpful and ready-witted; something also of early home influence, in a home where God and His prophets were known, unconsciously touching those around her with a fragrance as from another moral and spiritual climate. For she had not forgotten home or country, or the great prophet and his power to heal. Not with bitter memory of resentment for her own loss and wrong did this Hebrew girl treasure up the past, but as a fountain of help and blessing. "And she said unto her mistress, 'Would God that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.'" There must have been something in that captive maid that made her words of weight. They came at the right time, and in the right tone, and they went straight to the point. They were

listened to with belief and respect, and told to her master, and thence to the king. They became the subject of a royal embassy; of a letter from king to king, vaguely expressed it seems, since the person addressed, the king of Israel—possessing, himself, no gifts of healing—took it as an endeavour of the stronger potentate to fasten a *casus belli* on him. But the little maid and the great prophet she had spoken of understood each other. We know the rest of the beautiful story: the perfect cleansing in the waters of Jordan of the disease not all the rushing, cool, pure rivers that flow around and through Damascus could relieve; the corrupt flesh coming back as the flesh of a little child; the "earth" of the little maid's country carried back as a sacred treasure to the palace where she served; the heart of the great soldier turned to the God the little maid worshipped. Of the maid herself we hear no more. Whatever honours and rewards may have been lavished on her, we know her true reward was the healing of the leper and the winning of the heart of the great commander to God.

But as a type of "true girlhood" does not the simple story give us much?

The quiet observation of the prophet and his healing power; the undying influence of the early home, the faithful memory of all that was good and beneficent, the generous forgiving of all the wrong, the brave and ready speech, the weight of the few quiet words spoken in season.

Think how bitter and lonely her lot was, and how she accepted it, and turned the bitter waters to sweet, and returned good for evil, and overcame evil with good. What a weight of rebuke in the story to those of us who moan over the disadvantages of our circumstances; what a force of hope in it to encourage to conquer circumstances by accepting what is inevitable in them as the way of God for us, and so turning it into a way of peace and service and victory.

Then there is the story of another Hebrew maid, so differently placed, the only daughter, twelve years old—in the early development of those lands and races in the first blossom of

youth—tenderly cherished by father and mother, the light of their home. Of her we know little, but that she was dearly loved, that she died, and was raised again to life. In this story it is the relation of our Lord to the young girl and through her to all true girlhood that brings the lesson.

There is a peculiar tenderness in the call from the Divine lips which brings her back from the unseen world. Words of endearment from those lips are rare. To this young girl He gives the tender name her mother may have given her, the familiar name of the home.

"*Talitha Cumi.*" The tones, the actual syllables lingered in the hearts of those who heard, so that they have come down to us, unbroken, through the ages. "Talitha," "little fawn." Think of the grace, the gracefulness, the tender light of the soft eyes now closed in death, the eager, joyous movements now quiet in rigid stillness. Think how it reveals that all this vividness of life, this glow and stir of youth are dear and precious to Him! For all His words are of universal import.

When He says "Woman, why weepest thou?" He speaks not only to the Magdalene, but to all weeping women.

When He says "*Talitha Cumi!*" He speaks not only to the darling, only daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, but to all true girlhood.

And what does He say? "*Arise.*" What does He do? "He took her by the hand" (the call to arise and the taking by the hand were together), "and her spirit came again and she arose, and walked, for she was twelve years old."

What suggestive words to each of you! "*Talitha.*" With all this power of fresh life, this delight in action, this gladness of youth which is still yours—throw it not away, think not lightly of it. "*Arise*," arise to new life. He is sure to take you by the hand as you do. This sad and weary world has need of all your fresh life, all your gladness. Arise, develop all your powers by using them; let mind and heart grow together.

"She arose and walked," took her place in the home, and in the familiar ways of life again.

And the simple, suggestive story goes on. "He commanded that something should be given her to eat." The new life He gives is not independent of sustenance. The miracle of resurrection is to be carried out by the every-day means, the fulfilling of the universal natural laws. This intellectual, moral, spiritual life of yours needs "meat." If you would continue to arise, continue to walk onward, you need continually mental, moral, spiritual food. Arising, and walking, and eating depend on each other.

Nourishing your intellects with high thoughts and plain facts, with poetry and history and science, physical and metaphysical, is not a mere luxury; it will enable you to do the simplest duties better. We know there is also "meat in doing the will of Him that sends us," that there is the Bread of life, the Bread of God, by which, or rather by Whom alone, we live the true life in spirit and heart and mind. But the true balancing of exercise and food of the "good works" and the "meat" are very necessary, if we would not have the good works

end in overstrain and not quite good temper, and the intellectual food become mere dilettante dreaming.

Do not think intellectual work a selfish waste of time which might be spent on good works. It helps to make the good works wise, and wide, and healthy. And do not think the good works interruptions to intellectual development. They give it point and reality, and tend to make it genuine artist's and student's work instead of mere amateur trifling.

You live in days when all the sources of knowledge are open to you as to your brothers, and all opportunities are given of testing the accuracy of your knowledge and the value of your work. The work of women in these days is expected to be as good as that of men. No careers of true learning, and serving, are closed to us. And I have too much faith in God, who created us originally "man and woman," to have any fear that girls will cease to be girls, or women to be womanly—that the "like in difference," which means *co-operation*, will be replaced by a "like in like," which could only

mean dull uniformity or dividing *competition*;—that the sisters will ever become the weak rivals instead of the strong helpmeets of the brothers.

And then there is a third incident in the New Testament connected with youth, the youth of our Lord Himself; of Him in Whom all the varied strength of man and woman is united, of Him in Whom all the barriers that divide man and woman, as nation and nation, are abolished.

"They found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions."

We are, perhaps, too apt to think the questions He then asked were rather Socratic questions, for the sake of drawing out the doctors, revealing to them their own ignorance and teaching them. No doubt His questions would have also that effect. Do not the questions of any children continually lead us to the limits of our very finite knowledge, to the answer, if we are honest, "I do not know"?

And afterwards, no doubt, His questions were thus testing and sifting, revealing to the hearts

and consciences of those addressed their sin, and need, and ignorance. But it is scarcely like the simplicity and humility of that Divine childhood and youth to make this the *design* of the questions, whatever may have been the *result*.

He questioned, in frank honesty, the teachers of His people. "They sit in Moses' seat, all therefore that they say unto you, do," He said to His disciples long afterwards. And in these "questionings" of His youth we seem to have a guide for our own.

Whatever else may be the destinies and the ministries of "true girlhood," it is certainly the golden age for *learning*, for gathering in the precious stores of experience and knowledge for future use.

There is no time for learning many things like the early time. Languages, for instance. Those learned early in life become instinctively part of us, like our own. And foreign languages, especially those in which the great Poems of the world are written, are certainly worth learning. Hebrew, for example, with the Psalms and Prophets; Greek, with the New Testament and

the great poets and dramatists; Italian, with its Dante; German, with its Faust (to say nothing of French, with its inimitable point and lucidity). For poems *cannot* be translated, carried over, as they are, from one language to another; the *naïveté*, the tenderness, the force, the beauty, the music—which is part of their inmost life—the national character, are untranslateable. And languages are learned so much more easily, and engraven on the mind so much more deeply, early.

So with history, which is travelling in Time. The larger a part of our living and thinking it is interwoven with the better. And Science, also, everything learned, or *begun to be learned* early, becomes so much more an essential part of ourselves. Let us, indeed, ask all the questions we can, of all the "doctors," the "masters of those that know," listening and learning as early and as long as we can.

It may be all sacred learning—all "in the Temple"; all, with reverence be it said, not secular, but "part of our Father's business."

The most hopeless and fatal thing for growth

of any kind—and the more fatal the earlier—is, of course, to imagine we have "already attained, or are already perfect," to lose the "Divine art" of listening and "learning"; to imagine there can be a person of whom we might not learn something—or that there can come a time when we may not learn more.

We lose our power of teaching if we think we have only to teach and not to learn. We lose our power of helping and serving if we do not humbly recognize that the poorest we try to serve have something to give us.

For, all the while, the highest aim is not to *do* but to *be*.

There are two simple everyday facts recorded of our Lord's earthly life that come home very close to us.

He must have *learned to read*. In the synagogue, they gave Him the book, the roll of the Scriptures, and He opened it and read.

And He must have learned to *write*. While the accusers of the sinful woman went out, one by one, "He stooped down, and with His finger *wrote* upon the ground."

Reading—and writing: they mean so much in our education; two great keys of knowledge and of intellectual progress—of learning, and appropriating, and imparting what is to be known. He also used these keys—these ordinary human methods. It brings Him very near us.

And all the while that we are using these two keys—and learning still to use them, learning in the higher sense to read and write—for it takes some time—we ourselves are, in a higher sense still, being written on, and read. On our hearts are being silently engraven characters that do not wear away; our lives are being silently read, for loss or gain, by those around us.

And of all this writing, the deepest is often that first engraven, in those early years that are still yours. As in a palimpsest, whatever writing is traced afterwards over the letters that seemed to be erased, when you *look through to the light* those earlier graven characters *can be read* through. And these are the characters now being engraven with indelible power on your minds and hearts.

Be still, sometimes, that the Divine writing

may not be marred, and that the Divine voice may be heard.

Whatever you do, or leave out, do not leave leisure out of your lives, quiet times for listening.

For, quite as really now as eighteen hundred years ago, if we are quiet and listen, the Hand "takes each of us by the hand," the Voice says to each of us "Arise."

WOMEN UNDER THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS.

Women under the Jewish and Christian Religions [1].

THE subject of "Women under the Jewish and Christian Religions" naturally divides itself into the ideal set before us in those religions and the biography and history in which that ideal is carried out. Our chief sources of information must be those two great, ancient literatures (written in two languages that have never been dead, still, in a sense, spoken by two living nations) which we bind up together and call one book, *The Book*; and not falsely, because the unity of the Divine manifestation is as evident through the whole as the variety in the evolutions of human history through which the Divine manifestation shines.

And throughout these varied literatures, this

[1] Written at the request of the Chicago Women's Convention.

one Book, nothing seems more penetrating and lucid than the connexion between the relation of God to man and the relation of man to woman.

We will begin at the beginning—going back before the differentiation of the human race into nations, before the origin of the Jewish people, before the books of the generations of Abraham or Noah.

Most significant it is that this ancient literature of the most exclusive of nations begins, not with Abraham but with Adam, with man as man—with the common origin of the whole race. The "Gentile," who, however great, and good, and wise, was never, on pain of death, to pass the barrier in the Temple which the humblest Jewish woman might penetrate to lay her two mites in the Treasury, is declared to have been originally created "in the image and likeness of God," taken from the same dust, inspired with the same breath of life as any Hebrew of the Hebrews.

Before all the variations, unity. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

In the beginning "God created man in His own image. In the image of God created He him, male and female (man and woman) created He them."

In these magnificent, simple words we have the fullest natural theology, the clearest Divine anthropology; God and nature, God and man. The Divine personality of the Creator, infinitely and eternally distinct from the creature; no mere vague interfusion or counteraction of spirit and matter. Not between spirit and matter is the contrast, but between the supreme *Personality* and *things*.

And, very significantly, the first creature mentioned is *Light*, the light which, to her latest word, science can as little define as it can define spirit: not long since written of as a substance, now scarcely even as a force; an emanation, a vibration, an undulation, a mode of motion, but an emanation *from what*, an undulation *of what*, who can say? Something which we cannot in itself see or perceive, yet without which we can perceive nothing.

Thus the story of the material creation of

the Universe of things begins with mystery, as well as the story of the spiritual creation, of the Universe of persons. Light dawns on us as indefinable, as undeniable, as life, as the living soul, the personality created "in the image of God."

Then as to the creation of man, this ancient record states his composite nature—"dust" and "life": the body and the living soul. And then entangling itself in no psychological theories, leaving the fact of the interfusing of dust and life and soul, as it leaves the fact of light, it advances to the differentiation, to the history, "male and female, man and woman created He them."

With the existence of man, the creation of a human personality, in the image of God, a new significance comes into nature. It becomes a "garden" in relation to man, "to be dressed and kept."

It has food to nourish his earthly life, "things good for food." It has beauty to nourish his spirit, "pleasant to the eyes." And now, also, moral life, right and wrong, enter the world, will

and choice, obedience—only conceivable when disobedience is possible—"thou shalt, and thou shalt not," the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Beauty, goodness, truth, meaning, purpose, come into everything; and also the possibility of the perversion of all things.

The beasts and the birds are brought by God to man (in the delightful, grand, old childlike story) "to see what he will call them," and "whatever he calls every living creature, that is the name thereof." Comprehension, discrimination, sympathy are in this new creature in the likeness of God, for all the rest of the creatures.

And yet, amongst them all, he stands alone; none of them, try as the kindest and the cleverest of them might, could comprehend him. With all their beauty and grace, the music of their songs, the skill of their architecture, their delight in each other, their serviceableness to him, there was none who could respond to man. He could name them; but they could not name him. "For Adam was no helpmeet found," until, out of man, God "builded" woman, and brought her unto the man; and human history began.

The helpmeet is found. The chord of the true relation between man and woman, man and wife, the foundation of all other human relationships, rings out clear and full from the beginning.

"*Help*," the word is a high word, continually used for the help of God: no mere echo or repetition, or feeble supplement, but "help" over against him, she stands before him, face to face, side by side.

> "Not undeveloped man,
> But diverse . . .
> Not like to like, but like in difference."

> "The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink
> Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free."

True and full the perfect chord rings out from the beginning.

The woman is brought to the man; and human history begins.

And then, too soon, the grand choral harmony breaks into discord.

The creature doubts the Creator. The fallen woman, from the helper becomes the tempter. The fallen man, from the protector becomes the

accuser, accuses the woman and reproaches the Giver with His gift.

The paradise is exchanged for the wilderness, the joyful fellow-working in the garden becomes the toiling in the sweat of the brow, the battling with thistles and thorns.

What is allegory and what is prosaic fact, in the grand old story, may be debated for ever.

The essential fact remains, with all the history and philosophy, theology and anthropology folded up in it. Man and woman rise and fall together. The fact remains, that out of his toil comes the restoration of man; out of her suffering comes the redemption of the race.

In the wilderness begins the Family.

By the woman ages after, the promised Man, crushing the enemy's head, is "gotten from the Lord"; the perfect ideal of humanity is at last realized.

In the infinite tenderness of the Divine story, in the infinite resources of the Divine redemption, it is a woman's voice that breaks the echo of the long and bitter cry of revolt and ruin. Mary's "Be it unto me according to Thy word"

resolves at last the discord of the serpent's "Hath God said?"

And the perfect Man, the second Man the Lord from heaven, amidst so many other redemptions and renewals, reasserts the original law of the creation. "Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, man and woman?" renews the sacred original law of marriage, in the words of welcome of the first man to the first woman, the first husband to the first wife. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh."

"And so these twain upon the skirts of Time
Sit side by side, full-summed in all their powers,
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To Be,
Self-reverent each and reverencing each;
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other even as those who love.
Then comes the statelier Eden back to man,
Then reign the world's great bridals chaste and calm,
Then springs the crowning race of human kind[1]."

[1] Tennyson's *Princess*.

The early harmony is found again, deepened and enriched for ever, by all the discords that have intervened, through the life of perfect service, and the death of supreme self-sacrifice, which in glorifying all service and inspiring all sacrifice have glorified and inspired, as never before, her whose normal life is eventually service and sacrifice, and through womanhood have glorified and inspired all humanity.

But between Eve and Mary comes the great Hebrew literature, the story of the family of Abraham and the nation of Israel; and rarely indeed is the lost chord of the first ideal struck again.

The women mentioned in the patriarchal story are certainly far from ideal or exemplary. The great original law of marriage, fidelity as absolute for man as for woman, is lost in a tangle of temporary or polygamous connections, with the inevitable result of life lowered in all its relations; strifes, wrongs, jealousies, resentments. The equal help, the ennobling companionship, the sacred uniting love vanish in the mere desire for the perpetuation, in one way or another, of

the family, the stock. And with the degradation of marriage, sacred source and bond of all other relations, all other relations are tangled and ruined.

When we come to the nation there are indeed some names of women that shine out nobly. In all histories, unfortunately, it is not usually the best women whose names have the widest echo. Andromache's tender story scarcely resounds through the world like that of Helen of Troy.

But in the Jewish history there are names that ring out with trumpet tones, Miriam, Deborah, and Esther; and there are two others, Hannah and Ruth, that penetrate the din of strife with sweet low music of love and peace.

Miriam, Deborah, Esther, great national heroines! two of them also poets or prophetesses. The first linked with the birthday of the nation after the triumphant crossing of the Red Sea; the second with the fierce conflicts of the Conquest; the third with the oppressions and deliverances of the Captivity.

The first glimpse we have of Miriam is as the young sister faithfully watching the baby brother

in the bulrush cradle by the river, with ready wit and fine courage coming forward to the princess to fetch the mother as nurse to the child.

Through the youth of Moses at the court, and his forty years in the wilderness, and the long struggle for the liberation of the people with Pharaoh, we hear nothing of her. But when the Egyptian host are overthrown, and the sea is passed, there, on the Arabian shore, Miriam once more appears. The long faithful watching ends in the triumphant battle-song, as she sounds the timbrels and leads the choral dance, and strikes the exulting antiphon, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."

Not that her faith was always above desponding or murmuring, in the weary repetitions of the trials of the long wilderness journey; but the echo of those murmurs is drowned, in the national memory, by this faithful watching of the young sister, and the triumphant song of the aged prophetess. To the last days of the existence of her people in their own land an annual

festival was held in honour of Miriam sister of Moses and prophetess of Israel.

Deborah stands before us, more detached and more original. Not the *courage* of the men of her race, but the *failure* of their courage, seems to have enkindled the patriotism which made her a prophetess, a leader, and a judge.

The wife of Lapidoth, to her, under the palm-tree, the people came as their judge, recognizing in her the judicial office, in general opinion that least adapted to a woman.

No hereditary princess or queen, but judge, the office in all history least official; by divine right of capability and response of the heart and judgment of the people.

Like Joan of Arc, her patriotism had its roots in pity.

The "highways were desolate" for fear of the invader; the cowed and harassed people crept through hidden "bye-paths"; the villages were deserted; by the village "wells, at the drawing of water," the maidens were hunted down by the marauders, "and not a shield or spear was found to defend them, among forty thousand in Israel,

until Deborah arose a mother in Israel"; strong in her motherly pity to protect the weak, strong in the faith in the God of her fathers, which for the time the men of her race seemed to have lost, "choosing new gods"—the gods of the conquerors, from whom no inspiration and no organization could come.

Love was her inspiration; the pity of her motherly heart for the wronged and oppressed; love to the Eternal and Almighty, Infinite beyond all thought, closer to His people than any of the captains or judges He might send. Her faith and indignant pity restored the enfeebled wills, and enkindled the smouldering faith of her people. "The princes offered themselves willingly." Once more the scattered families, the divided tribes, rose to feel themselves a nation. She found a leader in Barak; but evidently to the end the inspiration and the organization of nation and army were from her. Without her, Barak could not plan the campaign, would not go forth to the battle. She led them up "to the heights," she sent them down at the right moment "to the plains," to encounter "the nine

hundred chariots of Sisera." The foe fled and were cut down by the pursuers, "swept away by the flooded Kishon," till none were left, save Sisera fleeing desperately to the Kenite tent to be slain there by the hand of another woman.

Then arose from Deborah's lips the song of victory; not a mere antiphonal response or refrain, as with Miriam, but a grand choral patriotic battle song, sung in responses from men to maidens, from tribe to tribe; a hymn of praise, for the families returning in peace to their homes, for the nation returning to the Eternal God of their fathers.

The last strophe of the song reveals the source of Deborah's strength, beneath the motherly pity, beneath the fiery patriotism—

"*They that love Him shall be as the sun as he goeth forth in his strength.*"

Loving Him, the Eternal, the God of her fathers, that brave woman had shone forth on her people as the sun in his strength. The clouds and storms were scattered, and the land had rest forty years.

Then comes an era of national splendour. The Judges "under the oaks and the palm-trees" are succeeded by kings reigning in great cities, with palaces as magnificent as those of the kings of the nations around. For the curtained Tabernacle on the hill side arose the Temple with its cloisters and courts crowning the heights of Jerusalem.

And then, division of the nation, degradation of the worship, faithlessness in the family life, faithlessness of the nation pledged to its God; the Temple destroyed, the city ruined, the whole nation scattered hither and thither, exiled and captive, yet again and again, nevertheless, by the power inherent in the faith, by the buoyancy innate in the race, rising to high place among their oppressors. Recovering and beaten back, successful and hated—as so often in that wonderful Jewish story, until another great national peril called forth another great national heroine: Esther the queen, risking death for her people in the palace of her husband King Ahasuerus, the Xerxes of the Greek war [1].

[1] Dean Stanley's *Jewish Church*.

From her lips no prophetic hymn, no victorious battle song comes down to us, but imperishable simple words of self-sacrifice greater than these—"*If I perish, I perish.*"

Not in the excitement of the battle-field, yet brave as Leonidas at Marathon, is she. In the home, in the palace chamber, she encountered the deadly peril alone and won the day and saved her people from destruction.

And for thousands of years afterwards, through that Captivity and the Return and the long dispersion of the ages since, her people kept the Festival of the Deliverance she had wrought.

Lofty and varied are the gifts recognized and the services rendered by these three. Prophecy, poetry; faculty to rule, to judge, and to organize; courage to restore a nation that had lost its courage; faith to revive the faith a nation had lost; heroism to brave a despot alone.

What is the moral ideal thus upheld? An exalted faith in God; self-sacrifice for Israel, for the nation; pity, courage, constancy. Beyond the nation—enemies to whom no pity was due, horse and rider overwhelmed in the sea: swept

away by the river Kishon; the fugitive murdered, sleeping in the tent, by the hostess who had welcomed him; the Persian foes massacred ruthlessly at the permission of Ahasuerus, as they would doubtless have ruthlessly massacred the Jews; a whole family hanged on the gallows sixty feet high prepared by their father for the Queen's uncle.

For Israel, devotion without bounds; for those outside Israel, or hostile to Israel, judgment without mercy. The way is far between this and Joan of Arc pausing in the pursuit of the enemy and dismounting to rest the head of a dying foe on her knee.

With Ruth or Hannah we come to a different strain. These pathetic stories give us glimpses into the depths of the common human life flowing beneath the conflicts of races and religions.

Ruth the Moabitess; her story blossoms like a fragrant flower amidst the stony deserts of strife. It is good to think of her name in the Genealogy of Jesus, Son of David, Son of Mary, Son of Man. In all history there is not a tenderer story than this of the young widowed

woman cleaving to her husband's widowed mother, sharing her poverty and bereavement, embracing her faith, and going back to sustain the desolate heart in the old home, among a race she had never known. Ruth is not ranked among the sweet singers of Israel; yet no sweeter music has come down to us from the past than her tender words, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

And again, Hannah! poetess and prophetess through a mother's love and joy; sending her one birthday song through the ages, till its notes blend as a tender prelude with the Magnificat of Mary the Blessed Mother of Jesus.

And so the Jewish story passes on through storm and sunshine, day and night, to its fulfilment.

Throughout the centuries the Ancient Ritual had borne witness to the holiness of God, and to the separating, desecrating nature of sin. From age to age the Jewish Prophets had proclaimed

the Infinity and Omnipotence of God in comparison with man,—all the inhabitants of the earth as grasshoppers before Him; and also at the same time the opposite truth of the close union of God with man, the marriage of the Eternal to the chosen nation, which made idolatry with them as the infidelity of a wife. And between these opposite poles of truth, gradually clearer and clearer, had arisen the vision of the Elect One, the Servant, the Son; Son of God, Son of Man; King, sufferer; as a Judge on His throne, as a Lamb dumb before her shearers; redeeming, atoning, reigning: until at last this Mediator appears, this link between the Eternal and Infinite and the children of a day, this atonement between the Holy and the sinful—Emmanuel, God with us, appears. And in words which must have had the deepest significance to the Jewish people, to those who week by week listened to the appeals of the Prophets—the last of the prophets, the forerunner of the Christ, the "Voice crying in the wilderness" proclaims Him to be not only Son of God and Lamb of God, but "*Him that hath the Bride.*"

The morning of joy had dawned at last; we feel it in every breath of the life-giving air, in every song of the universal hopes; in the glow of its love, in the stir of its new movement, in the expansion of its horizon.

Night, the divider, has fled. The barriers are melting away between man and God; between nation and nation; between man and woman.

And in nothing is the newness of life, of this new day, more manifest than in the women who are revealed in its morning light.

The long wail of revolt is broken by Mary's "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." The great matin hymn of Christendom, the Magnificat, is sung by a woman's voice.

Glance for a moment at the beautiful familiar stories in the Gospels. In the first group the two aged women; Elisabeth in the home, and Anna in the Temple: the sunset of human life and of the ancient world melting into the dawn of the new.

But Mary the Virgin Mother is altogether of the new day; no echo but a new voice; Mother of Him Who is the Life of all the living, crowned

with the blessings of all the beatitudes; "blessed among women"; blessed as "she who believed," blessed as she who "heard the word of God and kept it," blessed in her faithfulness unto death. She leads the glad company we know so well; Martha who ministered to the Master's earthly needs: Mary who sat at His feet and understood His words and brought the precious ointment for His burial: Mary of Magdala, last at the Cross, first at the Sepulchre, first Messenger of the Resurrection; the penitents whose names tenderly veiled from history, we shall first hear from the Book of Life; the costly gifts of the alabaster boxes, both reproached by man—one for the stain of too much sin, one for the waste of too much love—both accepted by the Master. What a range! what heights and depths! what varieties of condition and character the brief story embraces!

What is it then which makes this new life so new in the world?

Is it not, primarily, that their Christianity is Christ? It is devotion not to a cause merely, or a party, or a nation, or a race, as its inspiration,

but to the living Person; Son of God and Son of Man; Perfect Ideal of Man, Perfect Manifestation of God; Redeemer, Master, Brother, Friend.

Women are often reproached with regarding persons rather than causes. In the lower sense this may sometimes be true; the pettiest gossip as well as the greatest history gathers around persons: but in the higher sense we may trust, we may be sure, it will be always true. History is in one of its noblest aspects the "essence of Biography," because "Personality is the inmost core of reality, because without Personality Love is impossible, and living Love is that good which is the beginning and end of the whole universe"; because "the true reality is not matter and is still less idea, but is the living personal Spirit of God, and the world of personal spirits which He has created. They only are the place in which Good and good things exist[1]."

Women's work must always be in large measure to recall from abstractions to persons,

[1] Lotze, *Microcosmos*.

from causes or societies, to the men, women, children, suffering, sinful, redeemed, restored, victorious, of whom societies consist and whose cause is the cause of God.

It is by the Revelation of Love as the deepest word, the central truth of the universe, through the glorification of service by Him Who was "among us as He that serveth," that woman has been and is being redeemed, liberated, understood, ennobled.

The ideal of womanhood, not of poor weak crippled womanhood, but of womanhood as God made it, that is, a life that has no meaning except in relation to God and to others, has become the ideal of all humanity; a life whose essence is love, sacrificing and serving; renouncing when renunciation is the way to serve; ruling when ruling is the way to serve; rebuking when rebuking is the way to serve; silently suffering when patience is the way to serve; fearlessly fighting when resisting is the way to serve; dying when death is the way to serve.

And after this primary group gathered around the Child Jesus, the Healer, the Redeemer, the

dying Saviour, the Risen Lord, what comes next?

Is it a step downwards from the last chapter of the Gospels to the first of the Acts of the Apostles? from the last visible steps of Jesus Christ on earth to the first visible steps of His Church in the world? Pictorially it may certainly seem a step downwards into prose and the commonplace.

From the Mother and the Magdalene at the Cross, from the "Mary" and "Rabboni" at the sepulchre, it may look like a descent into very ordinary prose to Dorcas sewing her coats and garments for the poor widows. But we know it is really a step onward; from receiving to giving, from being healed to healing, from the morning songs of rapturous welcome to the toiling and battling for a lost and suffering world through the burden and heat of the day. For throughout the ages the glow of the morning, and the tones of the "Mary" and "Rabboni," the "Unto Me," and "I am with you all the days," do indeed make melody in the heart for ever, transfiguring the soberest prose into poetry. Dorcas,

Lois, Eunice, Priscilla, Lydia, are ever still, in heart, at the feet of Jesus, listening to His words; at His Cross adoring, at His empty sepulchre hearing His voice. For not once only, but once and for ever, the Christianity of the women of Christendom is Christ. Through that one Perfect Ideal they serve humanity, through that one perpetual Living Presence; not by the far off commission of a founder, but by the living voice of the Lord and Friend, they are sent forth day by day, hour by hour, with the "Go to My brothers and tell them I am risen," with the "In that ye did it to the least of these My brothers ye did it unto Me."

The stories of the women in the Acts of the Apostles are also indeed typical; Dorcas leading the great army of succour for the poor and needy, who through all advances in civilization, all forms of government, seem to be always with us.

Priscilla, the wife, the efficient "help over against" Aquila, in the tent-making and in the instructing more perfectly the eloquent Alexandrian; Lois and Eunice with the home training,

most inalienable of all the rights of women, most sacred of all their duties; the faith of the mother breathed into the son; the Holy Scriptures wrought into the child's mind and heart with the tenderest memories at a mother's knee: Lydia, "seller of purple," taking her honourable place in the world's work, generous hostess of Apostles, fearless succourer of martyrs: Phœbe, Persis, succouring many, bestowing much labour: the "elect lady" with her children walking "in the truth," addressed with gracious equal courtesy by the aged Apostle: the daughters of Philip, prophetesses, carrying on into the new era the inspiring music of Miriam and Deborah, the victorious battle songs of the wider warfare and the nobler conquests of the Cross. All gifts of mind and heart, all uses of such gifts, administrative, educational,—all vocations, are there, having their centre and root in the family and the home, yet expanding beyond it and working through it to the family of God, the lost sheep throughout the world. The home always the mightiest instrument and the truest model, with its Divine classifications, not of like with like, but

of "like in difference," its interdependent inequalities of age and sex and relationship.

And nevertheless, the world being broken and imperfect as it is, even in its homes, the imperfect homes ever supplemented, the corruptions of homes remedied by conventions, societies, sisterhoods, organizations of all kinds.

The germ of all true woman's work is indeed in these histories of the women of the Acts and the Epistles,—the earliest Church history. What are they but the leaders in that great army of liberation, that great company of healers ever needed on all the battle-fields?

The subsequent centuries work it out; through martyrdoms, in hospitals, through chivalry and monastic orders, throughout the Middle Ages, sometimes marred by Manichean misunderstandings of Divine natural laws, but never losing the great Christian ideal of service and sacrifice. Until, at the era of the Reformation, once more the veil between God and man we are so often weaving afresh, was rent from top to bottom; once more the home took its true place as the highest type of human life for those within it,

the fullest, sweetest fountain of life and succour to the world around it.

Throughout Christendom, on both sides of all ecclesiastical barriers, from St. Vincent de Paul and the Sisters of Charity to Elizabeth Fry in the prisons, the work of mercy flows ceaselessly on, ever fuller and stronger.

Until now, at this day of fullest hope and widest openings, not a field of fruitful work is closed to us, for redressing wrongs, relieving misery, for redeeming the worst, or for lifting the best to their highest development and fullest beauty. Still indeed we have to remember that the world, in its quietest shelters, as in its widest spaces, is always a battle-field between right and wrong, between the better and the best; that we never drift lazily into victory; that in the very homes which are so sacred, the battle against "family egoism" is needed, that, unless the home is really a fountain of living waters for the world around, it soon becomes a stagnant pool, breeding malaria for its inmates.

All fields are indeed open to us, home missions, foreign missions, city slums, village stag-

nations. The "rights" are won, if love inspires us to use them nobly, if we never forget how much of woman's work consists in recalling the world from idolatry of things to love of the persons for whom things exist. For we are indeed far from being liberated from the perils of idolatry. We are always making and building things, theories, formulas, laws, and then letting them become possessed by a monstrous vampire life which clutches and crushes our own; heaping up money in millions till the fertilizing rills, which should irrigate the land, are piled into icebergs which freeze and crush our own souls; making poor laws to help the poor and letting them be tangled into chains to degrade and fetter the poor; making hospitals to relieve the suffering and letting them stiffen into mere medical schools; building churches to lift hearts up to heaven and letting them become mere roofs to shut the heavens out. Nothing is too low to be worshipped if it is gilded by self-love. Nothing is too high to become an idol if we turn from the living Presence of Him Who lives and speaks through it to the thing,

the letter, the doctrine itself, to any "It" from Him.

All fields are indeed now open to us, of science and art, of philanthropic and religious work. We may speak as freely as Deborah and Miriam, where and when we will and in any cause we embrace. We may sing, if we can, to touch the hearts of thousands; we may write books to move, uplift and strengthen the hearts of millions, with the advantage that people need not read the books unless they like, and that the audience of a book is spoken to one by one, in hours of loneliness, or need, or pain, or sorrow, when the heart is most ready to be moved.

One woman's voice may bring hope into prisons; the touch of another may give a death-blow to slavery; another may arrest a nation on the fatal downward path of legalizing vice; another may take from a nation's hand the poison cup of intemperance,—and all this not by neglecting sacred simple home duties but in fulfilling them, not apart from the husband, the brothers and the sons, but inspiring them,

and with their aid; the mother's heart stirred by the loss of her own son to redress the wrongs of the slave mothers; the noble woman who dared to brave reproach and scorn to rescue her nation from the shame of recognizing that there must be a class of outcast women, sustained throughout by the chivalrous support of a husband as gentle as any woman.

If indeed the courage of the men of a race *fails* in righting any wrong or battling with any iniquity, if "among the forty thousand of Israel not a shield or spear is found" to defend the right, doubtless to the end some Deborah will arise in love to God and the oppressed, to fight the battle, a mother in Israel. But we intend to fight *together*, man and woman, husband and wife, brother and sister, not in mean competition, nor in mad antagonism, but in co-operation, side by side, woman for ever the "helpmeet" over against man.

We have a glorious company to follow. Century after century they come, the women of Christianity from every section of Christendom, through every age of the Church, fulfilling the

life of Christ, filling up the sufferings of Christ, healing, saving, teaching, leading up and on; refusing to recognize that any need be outcasts, to despair of rescuing from any depths, or of lifting to any heights; translating the prose of the world through Divine and human love into poetry, transfiguring the wildernesses of the world by patience and much labour into Paradises.

All the buildings look unsightly while the scaffolding is still up. All the battles look deadly prose while they are being fought, largely by the rank and file, fought through failures and mistakes and irritating wounds, through blood and fire, vapour and smoke.

The palms and the garlands come afterwards, and not always, visibly, here, to those who have fought the hardest. For, extend the glorious muster-roll as we may, we always end with the "time would fail me to tell," with the "great multitude no man can number."

Christianity is the ennobling and fulfilling of womanhood, because it is the manifestation of love and the glorification of service; because

the highest symbol of redeemed humanity is the "Bride of the Lamb," sharing for ever the fruitful service and victorious rule of the self-sacrificing Love which is on the throne, and at the heart, of the universe.

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